Hafa Adai!

$1.4M payment to IPI creditors OK'd. PAGE 2

DCP, SHS staff train with GAIN animal shelter. PAGE 3

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KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Assistant attorney general James Kingman speaks during an interview following another postponed arraignment in the contempt case filed against former governor Ralph DLG Torres.

'I've stopped being surprised by the delays'

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The ongoing contempt case against former governor Ralph DLG Torres has hit another roadblock, with the defense raising constitutional right violations. In response, assistant attorney general James Kingman says he is no longer surprised as it is clear what the defense's strategy is.

See DELAYS on Page 4

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Attorney Joaquin Torres, left, and former governor Ralph DLG Torres leave Superior Court judge *pro tem* Arthur Barcinas' courtroom yesterday following another postponed arraignment.

Perez: 3 revenue bills only address tax increase, but not enforcement

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Amendments to existing laws, as described in three of five revenue-generating bills that are before the Senate for action, only talks about increasing taxes, but is silent on enforcement, according to Mary Susan Perez, who is the Tinian resident head of the Department of Commerce.

In her testimony before the

See PEREZ on Page 4

OAG: MHS case still under investigation

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General's Criminal Division says charges have yet to be filed against a Marianas High School teacher who is being accused of sexually assaulting a minor.

OAG Criminal Division Chief Prosecutor Chester Hinds said last week that charges have yet to be filed

See OAG on Page 4

Kilili: Expanded child tax credit possible

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sablan

The U.S. Congress is expected to act as early as this month on a legislation to make more families in the nation—including in the Marianas—eligible for the maximum child tax credit when they file their 2023 income tax, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) over the weekend.

Introduced by Rep. Jason Smith (R-Missouri), H.R. 7024, or the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024, also increases

See KILILI on Page 4

INSIDE

LOCAL

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce expresses its gratitude to IT&E, a valued Chamber member, for their generous contribution of $3,000 in monetary funds for the 2023 Annual Business Person of the Year Gala.

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NATION

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis suspended his Republican presidential campaign on Sunday, ending his 2024 White House bid.

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WORLD

The Palestinian death toll from the war between Israel and Hamas has soared past 25,000, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said.

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GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

$1.4M payment to IPI creditors OK'd

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has approved the disbursement plan for over $1.4 million the court-appointed receiver will pay out to creditors of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona approved last week the distribution plan that Clear Management Ltd. had filed with the court for the over $1.4 million it raised from the auctions on IPI's gaming equipment.

The stipulated plan, dated Dec. 12, 2023, established a distribution plan for the over $1.4 million in available auction proceeds, as well as any funds that subsequently become available, to be distributed to all known judgment creditors of IPI, including the CNMI government and the limited receiver, Clear Management.

In total, IPI owes judgment creditors in federal and local courts and the CNMI government $21,108,568.71.

Clear Management, through attorney Michael White, previously informed the court that it is prepared to make distributions to the consenting judgment creditors and the CNMI government within 10 business days of the court approving the distribution plan.

According to the distribution plan, Winzy Corp. will be awarded $28,754.95; USA Fanter Corp. Ltd., $54,102.98; Kan Pacific Saipan Ltd., over $64,081; Art Man Corp., $20,052.79; Joshua Gray, $326,843.18; James Whang, $57,903.14; Tang's Corp., $24,681.65; G4S, $11,711.23; RC, $22,734.09; Yu's LLC, $21,017.93; Atkins Kroll, $23,211.44; Art Man Environmental Corp., $23,494.76; Michael Dotts Law Office, $40,709.64; Ecolab (Guam), $15,144.61; GT Building Systems International, $56,056.78; Hemine Ipwan Island, $24,519.70; Fujitec Pacific Inc., $161,500.30; Yantze Corp., $27,812.05; and the CNMI government, $455,666.58.

In the notice of proposed distribution of IPI gaming equipment auction proceeds it filed with the district court, Clear Management stated that it accepted bids totaling $1,933,098 and has officially collected $1,879,703.00, including the amounts already collected from the latest auction.

Although Clear Management has collected over $1.8 million in all from IPI auctions, Clear Management has about $1,460,000 to disburse to IPI's creditors due to commissions and expenses.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's Imperial Pacific Resort in Garapan is seen here in this file photo.

Alepuyo backs judicial nominee Tenorio

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Veteran lawyer Viola Alepuyo has come out in support of the nomination of deputy attorney general Lillian Ada Tenorio to become a Superior Court judge.

Alepuyo

In a letter she submitted yesterday to both Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) and Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), who chairs the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee, Alepuyo said Tenorio's legal experiences will be an asset to the Judiciary. Tenorio has been a CNMI Supreme Court clerk, legislative counsel, private practitioner, and recently as the deputy AG.

Last November, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios nominated Tenorio to serve on the CNMI Superior Court as an associate judge.

Alepuyo said women are underrepresented in both the CNMI Bar Association and the bench. To date, there is currently only one female judge—Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio—compared to the six male jurists in the CNMI Judiciary.

As a woman, daughter, sister, and mother born and raised in the CNMI, Tenorio will bring with her attributes and perspectives the bench, Alepuyo said.

"Her personal and professional experiences will add to the quality and diversity of the CNMI jurists," Alepuyo said.

DCP, SHS staff train with GAIN animal shelter

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Staff of the Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program and Saipan Humane Society are in Guam to learn from the Guam Animals in Need animal shelter on how to effectively run/manage the CNMI's only animal shelter and to gain more knowledge and improve their skills in the field of animal care.

SHS executive director Lauren Cabrera said that learning from GAIN is helpful "so we can avoid 'reinventing the wheel' and that DCP and SHS staff are "always eager to improve their skills and practices."

The staff exchange training is funded by Humane Society International.

Cabrera said SHS and DCP are both taking advantage of training opportunities with GAIN, since Guam is a close neighbor of the CNMI and GAIN has been in operations since 1989. At the same time, Cabrera said, it is hard to apply many animal shelter/control practices in the U.S. mainland to the CNMI's unique situation—its remote location, high number of strays, high rates of diseases, unique climate, and limited adopters.

With their GAIN training, SHS and DCP staff will spend time learning about different policies/procedures and animal husbandry duties, and will also go for ride-alongs with animal control officers in Guam. Then, "toward the end of the training, we will bring select GAIN staff over to Saipan to help put into practice what was learned," she said.

Cabrera said she is excited for SHS and DCP staff to see GAIN and how it functions, since the animal control and shelter programs are structured a bit differently in Guam. "I'm interested to see how we can implement different policies and things from GAIN here in order to provide more humane animal care, increase adoptions, and get to the root of animal overpopulation as a whole," she said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Humane Society Clinic director Ruby Ma checks in a patient during a spay/neuter clinic

DCP and SHS are sending one to two people at a time to Guam's shelter in one-week increments, with DCP manager Martin Pangelinan concluding his training from last Jan. 16 to 19. Other DCP staff are currently in training there, with others on the way.

Pangelinan found the training beneficial. He learned shelter management, properly washing down and feeding animals, animal care, humane euthanasia, and more. Another part was tying in with Guam's Department of Agriculture and their animal control, and learning their techniques—how they capture dogs and their processes.

"I was very fortunate to actually attend their first 'compassion fatigue training.' It's just basically for all animal care workers to get together because it is a tough job and being there for each other and taking time off if needed, so we won't be burnt out, because it is a tough job," Pangelinan said. "Overall, it's very beneficial. It's going to benefit the Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program and we're willing and open-minded to implement some of the stuff that we're learning out there."

Cabrera, who is also the board president of GAIN, said they are always in close collaboration. "Ali Hadley, GAIN's director, and the two vets helping the Guam shelter have been amazing mentors and helped to lay the foundation of SHS as we know it."

Hadley, for her part, said the CNMI has always been near and dear to her "and it is such an honor to be able to work with the Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program and Saipan Humane Society in this capacity. We have been very impressed by the team's enthusiasm for learning new skills and look forward to them continuing to do good work in their communities.

"Saipan is our sister island and we are happy to give back to them in this way. We look forward to seeing what the future holds with this partnership," added Hadley.

She thanked the Saipan Mayor's Office and DCP for their enthusiasm and interest in the training; GAIN for accommodating the teams and being invested in developing the training program; and to the Humane Society International for their funding and support.

US Marine from Saipan is named 'Your Hometown Hero'

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
Chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

An outstanding U.S. Marine soldier who proudly hails from Garapan, Saipan has been named "Your Hometown Hero" by the U.S. Marines' 1st Marine Logistics Group in Camp Pendleton, California.

Lance Cpl. Harry Fang, who serves as an ammunition technician with 1 Supply Battalion at Camp Pendleton, was recognized last Dec.20, 2023, not only as an exemplary Marine but also for his accomplished duties and responsibilities for his company.

Capt. Virginia Burger, spokesperson for 1st Marine Logistics Group at Camp Pendleton, and COMMSTRAT officer in the 1st Marine Logistics Group, spoke highly of Fang. "His role is part of the backbone of logistics operations that support Marine Corps operations around the world," said Burger, adding that he is "one of the top performing Marines in his company."

As per tradition, their group put together a short video interview with individuals named Hometown Heroes, Burger said.

In his video, Fang shared what keeps him motivated: "Most of my motivation is [that] I have a brother in the Marine Corps, that he is still going on, and even my friends from the islands too that have joined the Marine Corps…they motivate me to keep pushing."

You can watch the video on https://www.dvidshub.net/video/908745/your-hometown-hero-lcpl-harry-fang

US MARINE CORPS

U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Harry Fang, 1st Supply Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

CIVIL ENGINEERS: Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering (may be foreign equivalent). 60 months of experience as a Civil Engineer. For employment located in Saipan, the CNMI, provides construction management oversight. Responsible for the preparation, planning, coordination, and management of multiple project assignments within broad general objectives and limits. Work requires independent judgment in the evaluation, selection, land substantial adaptation and modification of standard techniques, procedures and criteria. Send resume to: **PACIFIC ENGINEERING GROUP & SERVICES (PEGS), LLC, Attn:** Jamerie Paras, Office Manager, 7303 Chalan Pale Arnold Rd., Suite 203, P.O. Box 502713 Saipan, MP 96950, Email Address: jparas@pegsmp.com

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-004

COMMONWEALTH DRIVE WATERLINE INSTALLATION PHASE I PROJECT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Commonwealth Drive Waterline Installation Project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of installation of new distribution line along Commonwealth Drive; connecting the new waterline to existing water mains; and installation of a new pressure reducing valve. The work is also inclusive of installation of new service laterals and water meters with individual pressure reducing valves, and relocation or reconnection of existing service laterals to new distribution line also with individual pressure reducing valve. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 270 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 23, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-004, Commonwealth Drive Waterline Installation Phase I Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 14, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at *manny.sablan@cucgov.org* with a copy to Mr. Aristotle Anicete, Project Engineer – via email at *aristotle.anicete@cucgov.org* and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at *christie.sablan@cucgov.org*

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

DHS removes man caught illegally entering Guam multiple times

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has deported Weng Bin, who was caught entering Guam by boat despite being on conditional release after serving his sentence in a similar case.

The U.S Probation Office filed a status report with the U.S. District Court for the NMI yesterday informing the court that DHS has "removed"—the DHS term for deportation—Weng, who was caught illegally entering Guam a second time just months after he was placed on conditional release after serving time in a similar case.

Back on Nov. 8, 2023, Weng was sentenced to an imprisonment term of time served for one count of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens when he and a group of 14 others entered Guam via boat.

Weng was then placed on supervised release for one year, which he violated recently when he entered Guam again by boat and had to be rescued by the U.S Coast Guard after his boat took in water.

According to probation officer Gregory F. Arriola's report, on Jan. 21, he received confirmation from DHS that Weng had successfully boarded an Asiana Airlines flight to China.

"The email included Mr. Weng's flight itinerary and a picture of him boarding his flight," said Arriola.

Last Jan. 8, a petition for a warrant for offender under supervised release was filed with the court after Weng failed to submit a Monthly Supervision Report for December 2023, failed to follow the instructions of the probation officer related to the conditions of his supervision, and left the judicial district without first getting permission from the court or the probation officer. On the same date, Weng was arrested by the U.S. Marshal Service in the District Court of Guam.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The U.S. District Court for the NMI.

On Jan. 9, Weng appeared before Guam magistrate judge Michael J. Bordallo for a petition for removal hearing. Also present was assistant U.S. Attorney Davarup Rastogi and federal public defender Leilani Lujan, who represented Weng.

Through his attorney, Weng waived an identity hearing, so the court signed a petition order of removal, ordering that he be brought back to the Northern Mariana Islands.

On Jan. 19, Weng appeared before District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona. During that hearing, the court learned that DHS had lodged a detainer against Weng and that there was a possibility of securing a return airline ticket to China for Weng on either Jan. 21 or 25.

With this information, the court continued the matter to Jan. 29 but instructed the U.S. Probation Office to provide an update regarding Weng's departure status. It was ordered that the upcoming court date would be vacated if it is verified that Weng had already departed the CNMI.

The court date has yet to be vacated.

OAG

From page 1

against the MHS teacher as the case is still under investigation—similar to what DPS had also said last week.

In a news release it issued last week, DPS said it received a call at approximately 12:54pm on Jan. 9, about a sexual assault of a minor incident at the MHS campus.

At approximately 1:01pm, officers arrived at MHS and met with the school's principal, Jonathan Aguon.

According to DPS, officers learned that a faculty member had been seen kissing a student on campus grounds.

"The incident is currently under investigation. No arrest has been made yet. The Division of Youth Services was also on the scene due to the victim being a minor child," DPS said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Marianas High School campus in Susupe.

PEREZ

From page 1

Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee at the Tinian Public Library last Friday, Perez asked how much of the funds that will be raised from the proposed tax increases will be earmarked for the department's Division of Alcohol Beverage and Tobacco Control, which is tasked with prohibiting the sale of alcohol and tobacco to minors through retail establishments, restaurants and bars.

Currently, the Department of Commerce on Tinian only has two ABTC employees and was allocated no funds in fiscal year 2024 for operations. Without adequate resources to operate, how is ABTC supposed to enforce the laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol and tobacco to minors, she asked.

The bills that were under discussion at the Tinian public hearing included House Bill 23-07, which aims to amend the Commonwealth Code on taxing tobacco products; House Bill 23-41, HD1, to establish an excise tax for betel nut/areca nut and lime mix/afok/or bweesch; and House Bill 23-78, HS1, to increase the tax on soft drink and alcoholic beverage containers.

The collection of taxes is the responsibility of the Department of Finance. The task of enforcing the prohibitions on alcohol and betel nut falls on the ABTC.

With these bills and any future revenue generating bills, specific allocations to the municipalities need to be included in the law, Perez said.

"What good will this bill do for my department if the law is passed and no funding allocation is given to the Tinian Department of Commerce to effectively enforce the existing laws?" she said.

Perez added that if the law is intended to also serve as a deterrent to minors purchasing and consuming alcohol, tobacco, and betel nut, then it is only proper for the law to allocate funds directly to ABTC—the enforcement division in each municipality—to ensure their mandates are carried out.

The Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee chaired by Sen. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota) also discussed during the public hearing two other revenue generating legislations, House Bill 23-68, HS1 and House Bill 23-74, HD1.

House Bill 23-68, HS1 seeks to impose a 10% ad valorem tax on private individuals purchasing vehicles from dealerships or private parties outside the CNMI, excluding businesses or commercial entities.

House Bill 23-74, HD1, proposes to impose an additional 3% tax on the yearly gross revenues of construction activities in excess of $250,000.

KILILI

From page 1

the maximum amount of the credit from $1,600 to $1,800 per child in 2023, $1,900 in 2024, and $2,000 in 2025 with an inflation adjustment.

Sablan said in his e-kilili newsletter that under the legislation, any year's credit not used to cover taxes is refunded directly to the parent.

He said the U.S. Treasury pays the Commonwealth for the cost of the child tax credit as a result of changes the U.S. Congress enacted in the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021.

The delegate said taxes vary from individual to individual, but as an example, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculates a parent with two children and $15,000 in earned income would see an increase in the family's child tax credit from $1,875 to $3,600.

Sablan said the legislation is the result of bipartisan negotiation between Senate Finance Committee chair Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) and House Ways and Means Committee chair Jason Smith (R-Missouri).

DELAYS

From page 1

Kingman said he wishes he were surprised by the defense's delaying strategies.

"I certainly offered to cure what they're looking for, but I wish I could say that I was surprised. I've stopped being surprised by the delays. It's very clear what the strategy is here," he said.

The parties in the case appeared before Superior Court judge *pro tem* Arthur Barcinas yesterday for an arraignment pursuant to the penal summons issued for Torres. Again, the court postponed Torres' arraignment and has scheduled a tentative hearing for Feb. 29.

Torres was initially set to be arraigned on Dec. 18, 2023, but that was postponed and rescheduled for Jan. 22, 2024. During that hearing, the defense raised the argument that the initial penal summons on Torres was improperly served since the prosecution failed to provide the information that had been filed against the former governor.

In yesterday's arraignment, Torres' lawyer, Joaquin Torres, argued that the former governor's constitutional rights could possibly be violated as no affidavit of probable cause had been filed and no probable cause hearing has been held to establish that there is probable cause to try the former governor for contempt and the other charges he is facing.

Barcinas verbally ruled to postpone the arraignment and ordered the defense to submit a legal brief stating their arguments despite Kingman's request that a probable cause hearing be held as soon as today to cure the possible constitutional rights violation.

"The defense made an oral motion that despite there not having a requirement for a probable cause hearing, they are constitutionally entitled to one. This is the first time they've raised this issue with this matter, even though it's a well litigated issue, and I offered to have a probable cause hearing even though I disagree that there is an entitlement to one," said Kingman in a later interview. "Nevertheless, the judge ordered a briefing on the issue, and I am interested to see what the argument is."

Kingman told reporters that an affidavit of probable cause is not required when there's a misdemeanor, or a penal summons similar to this matter, rather than an arrest. "There's a well-established distinction in the [law]. Every other jurisdiction has a similar non-arrest/ misdemeanor process without a probable cause hearing. This is not a complicated issue but one that the defense will be happy to pretend they don't know the answer to in order to delay this matter further," Kingman said.

Barcinas has now set the matter for a hearing on Feb. 29 to allow the prosecution and defense to file their briefs and responses on the matter.

On April 8, 2022, the OAG filed a criminal case against Torres, alleging 12 counts of misconduct in public office and one count of theft relating to the issuance of airline tickets for business class, first class, or other premium class travel for himself and/or Diann T. Torres, his wife.

The case also alleged one count of contempt for failure to appear in compliance with a legislative subpoena.

However, in August 2022, judge *pro tem* Alberto Tolentino dismissed the contempt charge against Torres. Specifically, Tolentino found that chief solicitor J. Robert Glass, the head prosecutor in the criminal case against Torres, may have been exposed to privileged and confidential information that prevents him from prosecuting Torres for contempt, therefore the charge was dismissed.

In November 2023, Kingman filed a new suit against Torres, charging the former governor anew with contempt over his failure to comply with a legislative subpoena last December 2021.

Aside from contempt, Kingman also charged Torres with misconduct in public office for failing to appear in compliance with a legislative subpoena.

Updated scheduled power service interruptions for January 2024

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public of a revised schedule for the power service interruptions. The originally scheduled power service interruption on Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024, has been rescheduled for Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024. See updated schedule of power service interruptions:

Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024

■ Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-12:30pm

■ Area(s) Affected: Chalan Laulau (IT&E building) and Garapan (Fiesta barracks and former Nam Dae Moon Restaurant)

■ Water Well(s) Affected: None

■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None

■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None

■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace two 40-foot wooden power poles with concrete poles and reinstall transformers, respectively.

CUC

The map of Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 23, 2024.

Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024

■ Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm

■ Area(s) Affected: Gualo Rai (BECQ building)

■ Water Well(s) Affected: None

■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None

■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None

■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace a 40-foot wooden primary pole with a 40-foot concrete pole and reinstall a transformer.

Tuesday, Jan 30, 2024

■ Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-12:30pm

■ Area(s) Affected: Chalan Kanoa (MS Villagomez building) and Garapan (Majesty Restaurant)

■ Water Well(s) Affected: None

■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None

■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None

■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace two 40-foot wooden power poles with concrete poles and reinstall transformers, respectively.

CUC

The map of Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 24, 2024.

Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024

■ Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am-2:30pm

■ Area(s) Affected: Garapan (Saipan OneTel building, QQ Car Rental, High Roller Poker, and Sang Jee Car Rental)

■ Water Well(s) Affected: None

■ Wastewater Facilities Affected: None

■ Traffic Light(s) Affected: None

■ Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to relocate and replace two 40-foot wooden power poles with 40-foot concrete poles, a 45-foot wooden power pole with a 40-foot concrete pole, and to reinstall transformers.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact its hotline at (670) 236-4333, visit its website, and monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates. For emergencies, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. ***(CUC)***

Scheduled water service interruption in San Antonio on Jan. 24

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public of a scheduled water service interruption on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, affecting customers in San Antonio. See additional information below.

Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024

■ Water Service Interruption Time: 8am-5pm

■ Area(s) Affected: Customers in San Antonio

■ Purpose: The interruption is necessary to facilitate the work of Tropex Garden, CUC's contractor for the San Antonio Waterline Replacement Project. This is to connect the new 8-inch water line to the existing 12-inch main line. The work aligns with the project to transition the water system from the old water line to the newly installed PVC water line.

Multiple tapping points are designed for this project to provide sufficient and beneficial water services for the customers in San Antonio.

■ About the Project: The San Antonio Waterline Replacement Project is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The newly installed distribution line will be commissioned after passing the required testing and disinfection procedures.

Please anticipate water interruptions during the transition phase from the old water system to the newly installed PVC water line.

CUC appreciates the public's cooperation and understanding as it works to ensure reliable service for its customers. For more information, please contact our hotline at (670) 236-4333, visit our website, and monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates.

In case of emergencies, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. ***(CUC)***

CUC

The map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled water service interruption in San Antonio on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

AMENDED REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

CHARLIE DOCK EXTENSION PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-001-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Charlie Dock Extension Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-001-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, January 26, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: January 18, 2024

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-005

OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR CUC ROTA's ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. For registration inquiries, please email Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-005, Office Space Lease for CUC Rota's Administrative Functions and Operations."* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at email address alvin.king@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Chamber Business Person of the Year Gala this Saturday

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is preparing for its annual signature event, the Annual Business Person of Year Gala, which is a fundraising event to assist the Chamber in pushing and accomplishing their mission, vision, and goals for its members and the business community.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024 at the Kensington Hall in the Kensington Hotel Saipan. The event, themed "Hafa Adai yan Tirow" serves as a dual celebration—commemorating business excellence in the CNMI and marking a significant moment for inducting both newly elected and returning members to the SCC's board of directors.

Encouraging a celebration of our island's distinct style, the Chamber urges attendees to attire themselves in island formal wear, infusing a local essence into the event. The evening promises a blend of elegance and significance as the Chamber recognizes contribution from and to our local business community.

The upcoming gala will showcase accolades in various categories, such as the 2023 Chamber Member of the Year, 2023 Non-profit of the Year, 2023 Small Business of the Year, and the recently added 2023 Sustainable Business of the Year, in partnership with the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, an esteemed member of the Chamber. The recipients in each category are expected to have exhibited outstanding commitment, innovation, and community influence throughout the year.

MARK RABAGO

Paradise Dental Spa was named the 2022 Small Business of the Year during last year's Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Business Person of Year Gala at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

The focal point and customary element of the event will be the presentation of the 2023 Business Person of the Year award, bestowed upon an individual who has displayed outstanding leadership and impact within the community and beyond. The Chamber encourage everyone to support and join them for a fun night of significance, elegance, culture, and good vibes.

Tickets can be purchased at $150 per person, which includes access to an open bar. Come and enjoy an unforgettable evening filled with live music, engaging in silent auction activities, a delightful dinner, networking opportunities, and positive ambiance.

Come and celebrate with the community on this special night. Secure your spot by registering through this link:

https://business.saipan-chamber.com/events/details/2023-annual-business-person-of-the-year-gala-355

In addition, the Chamber expresses heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed sponsors for their support towards the 2023 Annual Business Person of the Year Gala and for demonstrating their unwavering commitment to the Chamber's initiatives.

Gold Sponsors

- Triple J Saipan
- IT&E
- United Airlines

Bronze Sponsors

- Bridge Capital, LLC
- Calvo's Insurance Underwriters, Inc.
- Bank of Hawaii

Event/Monetary Sponsors

- AB Risk Solutions
- Century Insurance
- Paradise Dental Spa
- Friends First Marketing
- Eden F. Gullio-Odas
- Marianas Business Plaza
- PHI Pharmacy

Silent Auction/In-kind Sponsors

- D&Q Distributors
- Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc.
- 500 Sails
- Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan
- Island Training Solutions
- Northern Marianas Technical Institute
- LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort Saipan

The Chamber welcomes businesses and organizations to contribute their support to this event by participating as sponsors. If you are interested or if you have any questions, you can contact the Chamber office at (670) 234-7150 or via email at contactus@saipan-chamber.org.

MARK RABAGO

Triple J Five Star Wholesale and Triple J Truckload Store general manager Jay Santos was named the 2022 Business Person of the Year during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Annual Business Person of Year Gala at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

Don't overlook the part of the excitement at one of the Chamber's signature events of the year.

The Chamber is a non-profit organization in the CNMI with a membership of 140 members and growing. SCC is committed to empowering our enterprise as a resource, advocate, and connector for Saipan's private sector, our vision is to create an Island where businesses, family, and the community succeed as one. ***(PR)***

Chamber thanks IT&E for $3K contribution

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

IT&E recently donated $3,000 for the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's 2023 Annual Business Person of the Year Gala.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce expresses its gratitude to IT&E, a valued Chamber member, for their generous contribution of $3,000 in monetary funds for the 2023 Annual Business Person of the Year Gala. IT&E, Inc. has consistently demonstrated unwavering commitment to the Chamber's initiatives during previous events, and the Chamber extends appreciation for their continued support.

The gala for the Annual Business Person of the Year, a prominent event in the SCC's calendar, is set for Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024 at the Kensington Hall, Kensington Hotel Saipan. The theme "Hafa Adai yan Tirow" encourages a celebration of our island's distinct style, the SCC urges attendees to attire themselves in island formal wear, infusing a local essence into the event.

Businesses and organizations are welcomed by the Chamber to join IT&E in endorsing this event. Sponsorship opportunities are open, and those interested can reach out to the Chamber office at (670)-234-7150 or via email at contactus@saipan-chamber.org.

The Chamber anticipates a prosperous gala, where individuals and organizations in the business community will be acknowledged and celebrated, while cultivating a strong sense of companionship.

To obtain additional details regarding the gala or to confirm your attendance kindly visit:

https://business.saipan-chamber.com/events/details/2023-annual-business-person-of-the-year-gala-355?calendarMonth=2024-01-01.

The Chamber is a non-profit organization in the CNMI with a membership of 140 members and growing. The Chamber is committed to empowering our enterprise as a resource, advocate, and connector for Saipan's private sector, our vision is to create an Island where businesses, family, and the community succeed as one. ***(PR)***

Hyatt starts online auction to care for CNMI dogs and cats

After Hyatt Regency Saipan donated linen and terry to Saipan Humane Society worth $4,000 in 2023, the hotel continuously supports small businesses and non-profit organizations.

Partnering with Saipan Humane Society, the resort is spearheading an online auction to support the only animal health clinic in the CNMI. The auction was inaugurated during the Tropical Christmas Tree ceremony and remains open to all CNMI & Guam residents, as well as all who would like to donate.

To encourage the collection of much needed funds, Hyatt Regency Saipan is sponsoring accommodations for two specialty suites.

The auctioneer with the highest donation will receive a one-night stay at the prestigious 160-square-meter rooftop Presidential Suite with breathtaking views over Saipan and the ocean. Included in the price is the breakfast buffet at Kili Café & Terrace for two adults, valued at $1,700.

The starting bid is US$ 500.

The second highest bidder will enjoy a return of a one-night stay at one of the hotel's 80-square-meter Executive Suites, equally with breakfast buffet at Kili Café & Terrace for two adults, worth $600.

The starting bid for the Executive Suite with breakfast for two is $250.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sandy Staffler Weaver of Saipan Humane Society receives from Hyatt Regency Saipan Rooms director Ally Hong a donation of linens, one of the many items that the animal clinic needs.

Bids are welcome via e-mail to SPNRS-Marketing.Communications@hyatt.com. Open to World of Hyatt members and non-members. State name, contact information, World of Hyatt membership number. The online auction is accepting bids until Feb. 15, 2024.

Winners will be contacted and announced on Hyatt Regency Saipan social media platforms at the end of February 2024.

Saipan Humane Society attends to 40-50 dogs and cats daily for medical needs on an island with 21,000 dogs and it is a challenge, without any other resources or veterinarians. They rely on financial support through grants, fundraising events, and donations. The proceeds of this auction will allow them to continue to offer medical support, rescue, rehabilitate and find homes for island dogs and cats. ***(Hyatt)***

Finu' Chamorro For Beginners Book Launch

LEIGH GASES

From left, *Finu' Chamorro For Beginners* author Dr. Faye Untalan, Northern Marianas College professor Dr. Barbara Hunter, Northern Marianas Humanities Council director Leo Pangelinan, and Chamorro educator/author Manny Borja listen to questions from the audience during the book launching event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

LEIGH GASES

Audience members fill the Children of Our Homeland Center of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library during the book launching event of the *Finu' Chamorro* by Dr. Faye Untalan at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

LEIGH GASES

Finu' Chamorro author Dr. Faye Untalan, left, answers questions during the Q&A portion of the book launching event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

LEIGH GASES

Northern Marianas College president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero makes his opening remarks during the *Finu' Chamorro* book launching event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

LEIGH GASES

Audience members of *Finu' Chamorro*'s book launching listen to the panel answer questions during the Q&A portion of the event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

LEIGH GASES

Educator Donald Mendiola makes his remarks and asks questions during the Q&A portion of *Finu' Chamorro*'s book launching event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

University of Guam Press' Victoria Lola Leon Guerrero makes her welcoming remarks and introduces the book *Finu' Chamorro* and its author, Dr. Faye Untalan, during the book launching event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

LEIGH GASES

Audience members of *Finu' Chamorro*'s book launching listen to the panel answer questions during the Q&A portion of the event at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Friday night.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

QUALITY CONTROL IS A BIGGER PROBLEM THAN WE REALIZED.
OEING
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LAS VEGAS SUN 2024 MIKE SMITH
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE INAS

EDITORIAL

Dems dismiss Trump supporters at their peril

Donald Trump's blowout win in Iowa Monday night was a wake-up call for Democrats, but not for the reason they think.

The reaction from the left over Trump's 51% rout in the state's Republican caucuses was expectedly agitated.

Former Senator Claire McCaskill declared on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" that "it wasn't that great of a night for Trump," and that getting 50% of the vote was actually a bad thing.

President Joe Biden posted to X: "But here's the thing: this election was always going to be you and me vs. extreme MAGA Republicans. It was true yesterday and it'll be true tomorrow."

And Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who is running for Senate, rolled out a new Jan. 6-themed ad warning of a dire future ahead following former Trump's win in Iowa, The Hill reported.

"Now, we face an even greater danger," the ad narrator states as video shows the New York Times headline "Why a Second Trump Presidency May be More Radical than His First."

It is, to a degree, a repeat of 2016, when Trump supporters were written off as racist, sexist, hyper-religious filler in a "basket of deplorables."

The results of election night 2016 had media and pundits reeling. As the results came in, NBC News' Chuck Todd declared: "Rural America is basically screaming at us, saying, 'Stop overlooking us!'"

It wasn't just rural America, Trump voters across the country sent the message that they, the hardworking, taxpaying, non-elite didn't feel like anyone was listening to them but Trump.

The sloughing off of non-Democrats from the zone of political importance has only gotten worse as progressives have maneuvered their agenda to the top of the pile. Don't want an electric car—you're part of the problem. Balk at picking up the tax tab so college students can walk away from some of their loans—you just don't get it.

One of the factors behind Trump's 2016 win was the silent cadre of supporters—those who didn't show up to rallies or wave signs. They didn't want to appear with those who did—but they voted all the same.

Now Democrats are repeating the same plays, casting Trump supporters as a homogenous threat and not as diverse fellow Americans with issues worth listening to.

Trump voters know it's not OK for eggs to cost $6 a dozen, no matter how much Team Joe touts Bidenomics as a good thing. They see cities and states buckling under the strain of sheltering waves of migrants to their fiscal detriment, while Biden paints a rosier border picture.

Democrats in power had four years to listen, to learn and to lean in. Instead Biden appealed to and continues to appease the progressive wing of the party, in a bid to remain on the good side of younger voters.

They're a voting bloc, but they're not the only one, and certainly not the only one of importance.

Biden's poll numbers are approaching the earth's core, with an ABC News/Ipsos poll finding a 33% approval rating. He can dismiss Trump's supporters as extremists all, but the promoter of

See DEMS on Page 9

Solutions '24—fixing the border

By MARTIN SCHRAM
Tribune News Service

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive. Readers may send him email at martin.schram@gmail.com.

So this guy walks into a bar. He sits down next to me and pretty soon he's telling me the story of how he got here.

He came as a stowaway. He was just a kid. His dad decided the family could sneak across the border and into the United States—and build a grand new life. He hid in a bathroom with his mom, dad and five older sisters when the train stopped at the border. U.S. border checkers came down the aisle checking everyone's documents. But they had none. So they hid and hoped. The officers walked right past their bathroom. Soon the train started rolling again.

Undocumented but undetected, the stowaway family crossed the border. And that boy became the famously proud, patriotic American who was telling me his story at the bar.

He was Abe Rosenthal, a legend at The New York Times. You won't find that story in his official New York Times bio or obituary. But after we rode some presidential candidate's campaign bus, Abe met me in that bar and told me his real story, long ago. He was born in Canada in 1922 to a Byelorussian farmer and his wife who'd immigrated in the 1890s.

Once in the United States, the Rosenthals settled in the Bronx. Abe was hired by The Times in 1943, won a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting, became the Times' executive editor, then was a columnist. Yet, perhaps Abe's proudest moment came after eight years at the Times—when he became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

I found myself recalling Abe's northern border story this past week while listening to Donald Trump and his Republican acolytes recycling their doomsday warnings that southern border surges by criminal and venal immigrants would be the ruination of our nation. But policy makers must never lose sight of the fact that, while smugglers prey, many desperate migrants may still represent the best hope for our country's future.

Abe's tale may appeal to Joe Biden. When he was a freshman senator, Biden and I occasionally met to talk about foul-ups at the White Houses I was covering. Biden was good at grasping how presidents and staffs mucked up their best chances for success. Today, I hope he's finally grasped the fact that his White House, Homeland Security and State Departments apparently failed to act with urgency and perception to reverse the surge at our border that is fed by gangs of smugglers who prey upon desperate Central and South Americans.

In a couple of columns last year, I urged solutions that the Biden administration could have adopted to ease the repeated southern border surge crises. The administration indeed has announced programs that adopted the principles I suggested. But they were done without the urgency and intuitive message communication strategy needed to convince the migrants not to walk those hundreds of miles—thinking that if they are caught at the border they'll be allowed to stay.

Most believe if they are caught entering illegally, this can be their best hope of being allowed to stay.

I have urged the establishment of regional visa and asylum processing centers far from the border—such as in Guatemala. And while the administration announced that plan, it hasn't completed it, nor incentivized the desperate migrants with a convincing program.

So let's boldly label these facilities: "EXPRESS VISA PROCESSING CENTERS." Let's vastly increase the U.S. government personnel who will rapidly process all visas that are applied for at these centers. Perhaps tent facilities can be arranged for those who must wait weeks.

Let the U.S. announce repeatedly that processing time at the border will be much slower than at these "express" facilities. Let's have them use a fleet of boldly colored, red-white-and-blue "STARS & STRIPES EXPRESS" buses that will transport thousands of those who are approved for asylum, or work or student visas across the U.S. border. Then let the immigrants be transferred to other similar buses that will take them to destination cities arranged by the government.

Also: Latin America and the world must see proof in the form of repeated video news showing that illegal entry no longer works. Videos of immigrants who entered illegally being rounded up and transported back—or sent to new Express Visa Processing centers away from the border so they can have a chance to finally do it right.

One year ago, on Jan. 5, 2023, a White House fact sheet announced a series of "new border enforcement actions." In April, Homeland Security announced "Sweeping New Actions to Manage Regional Migration."

But desperate migrants saw nothing happen. And as 2023 ended, we all saw new record border surges.

What we have here, Mr. President, is a failure to innovate, a failure to communicate—and nobody seems sure who's in charge.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Saving Gaza means pressing Iran as well as Israel

By MARC CHAMPION
Bloomberg Opinion

Marc Champion is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering Europe, Russia and the Middle East. He was previously Istanbul bureau chief for the* Wall Street Journal.

The gulf between how Israe Marc Champion l and much of the world thinks about events in Gaza is growing, and with it the risk of regional escalation. The nature of that disconnect needs to be better understood, and soon, to reduce the threat of a disastrous wider war with Iran.

International attention continues to focus on Palestinian suffering, seen now through the prism of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, where South Africa has accused the Jewish state of genocide. Many in the Middle East and West take Israel's guilt as a given. For them, after decades spent illegally occupying Palestinian lands, Israel is the problem and the solution is self-evident: The Israel Defense Forces need to stop shooting and leave Gaza.

Within Israel, though, the ICJ case is seen by most as a calumny that only proves antisemitism's enduring nature. Where, after all, is the case against Hamas, a group committed in its charter to Israel's destruction? Did it drop leaflets warning people to move to safety before starting its meticulously planned rampage of murder and rape last October? No. It clearly sought to kill as many Jews as it could in the few hours it had.

The merits of the ICJ case are for another column. In the meantime, facts on the ground are changing in favor of escalation. The IDF, despite saying it was shifting to a lighter-touch strategy in Gaza, looks to be digging in for a long war. Houthi attacks launched against international shipping from Yemen, in the name of forcing an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, have triggered retaliation by the U.S. and U.K. Tit-for-tat exchanges of fire between Hezbollah and the IDF in the north are shifting the attention of Israelis there.

Everywhere in the background stands Iran, which itself just launched missile strikes against targets in Iraq and Pakistan. It was avenging a recent terrorist bombing that it first linked to Israel despite a claim of responsibility by Islamic State.

Recent statements by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can be seen as warning that he considers opening a second front in Lebanon an option. So, too, the assassinations of not just a Hamas leader in Beirut, but also one of Hezbollah's top military commanders.

"We're going to bring back safety to the south and to the north," Netanyahu said in a Jan. 14 nationally televised address marking 100 days since the Oct. 7 attacks. "Nobody is going to stop us, neither The Hague, the axis of evil or anybody else."

Israel's more conservative press currently gives the impression that a campaign is underway to build public support for attacking Hezbollah, whose missiles have forced tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes along the border. "Another war beckons," Jacob Nagel, a former head of Netanyahu's National Security Council, said in an op-ed he co-authored in the Jerusalem Post.

"The day will come sooner rather than later," the same newspaper wrote two days later in an editorial, when "Israel will have to unleash its full firepower against Hezbollah."

Neither Iran, the current U.S. administration nor Hezbollah—mindful of domestic opposition to war in an exhausted, economically spent Lebanon—wants a regional conflagration. But increasingly, Israelis see the root of their problem, and therefore the focus of any potential solution, as Iran.

If you see the world as a game of Risk, you can build a pretty convincing case for action. Iran, after all, has accelerated the rate at which it produces near-weapons-grade uranium, according to the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency, bringing it closer to a potential nuclear breakout. For now, the estimated 100,000 Hezbollah troops and 150,000 rockets and missiles parked on Israel's northern border provide Tehran with an insurance policy against any direct Israeli attack to prevent Iran from taking that step.

But if a breakout were to happen, Iran could afford to risk Hezbollah in a fight with Israel. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic is engaging the U.S. and Israel via proxies—not just in Gaza and Lebanon, but also Iraq, Syria and Yemen—to keep their forces mired in asymmetric, reputation-sapping fights. So why not stop that by destroying Hezbollah, while the group and its Iranian backers, instead of waiting until they're ready? Why not, to use the unforgettable phrase of Saudi Arabia's then King Abdullah, cut off the head of the snake by attacking Iran directly?

"One Iranian proxy holds Israeli hostages, kidnapped in Gaza. Another, Hezbollah holds Israeli and Lebanese populations hostage with their attacks, and now the Houthis are holding the whole world hostage," Avi Melamed, a former Israeli intelligence official, told me. "People have to understand that this war goes way beyond Hamas. This is a pivotal moment in the trajectory of the Middle East, for the U.S. geopolitical position worldwide, and for story of Arab normalization with Israel."

And every event that pushes against regional stability, he said, leads back to Iran.

The short answer to the questions posed above is that this isn't a board game. As should be evident by now, neither the U.S. nor Iran is in full control of either their allies or events. From day one, the Biden administration has been shouting itself hoarse for Israel to adopt a less scorched-earth approach to Gaza, to little effect.

The Houthis have paid still less attention to U.S. warnings, or—for now at least—its missile strikes. Meanwhile, the costs of invading Lebanon, in human and economic terms, almost certainly would be larger in Lebanon than in Gaza. Ballistic missiles would rain on Tel Aviv, and the Israeli response, likely against Beirut, would be devastating.

Yet Iran does see itself as the spider at the center of the web of proxy forces it calls the axis of resistance, and the risk of escalation is real. For now, most Israelis don't want the IDF to invade Lebanon, but with every exchange of rockets the number who believe there is no choice will grow.

The U.S. and its allies need to find non-military means of pressuring Tehran—from squeezing Iranian oil exports to cyberattacks—to back off or risk that events spin toward a much larger conflict.Changing Israel's behavior toward the occupied territories is an essential requirement for restoring stability in the Middle East, but it's only part of the solution.

Israel won't relent until the root threat posed to it by Iran and its proxies also gets addressed, even once Netanyahu and his extremist coalition are out of the picture. No matter how much you hate U.S. hegemony, only a tougher, braver wielding of sticks and carrots against the governments of both countries is likely to work.

The Boeing 737 Max 9 safety problems show the FAA isn't doing its job. We need whistleblowers

By DEBRA KATZ
Chicago Tribune

Debra Katz is a whistleblower and civil rights attorney and a founding partner of Katz Banks Kumin LLP.

The United States has enjoyed years of extraordinarily safe air travel. While this is a remarkable feat, it shouldn't take a viral video and loose bolts to invite tough questions for airplane manufacturers and the industry as a whole.

The recent news of a door plug on Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 blowing out after takeoff is alarming for all who fly. The resulting inspections of the Boeing 737 Max 9 fleet, which turned up loose bolts and similar issues in these planes, begs grave questions: How did this happen? Why didn't we know about this? Why did it take a near disaster for these flaws to come to light?

This stunning problem also suggests that the safety we have enjoyed in commercial air travel has come in spite of decades of a Federal Aviation Administration that is, by its own admission, understaffed, underfunded and drained of expertise across the agency. In truth, it is clear now that we have not been very safe; instead, we have been very lucky. The only recent consequence of these problems domestically until now is a series of near misses on runways.

These safety and regulatory problems go far deeper than air traffic control; they have significant effects on airplane manufacturing. As a whistleblower in 2019 reported, significant issues at the factories that manufacture Boeing planes led him to seriously question the safety of the aircraft going to fly, but no action was taken on his concerns, and FAA regulators routinely sided with industry.

The unfortunate truth is that in its recent history of abdicating much of the expertise in safety to the airplane manufacturers and third parties, the FAA effectively operates as an agency that is captive to some of the largest aviation companies. Without an empowered regulator to step in and preemptively ensure planes are safe, these airlines are only accountable for their safety in that accidents do not affect their bottom line.

In my own practice, I know that the fear of shareholder reprisal does not meaningfully save lives before calamity strikes—but it does lead companies to cut corners and push safety to its limit in the name of profit. In the absence of a regulator, we need more people to come forward to tell their stories. We need whistleblowers who are willing to speak up and start answering our critical questions.

The CEO of Boeing, Dave Calhoun, recently wrote in a memo to employees that "when serious accidents like this occur, it is critical for us to work transparently with our customers and regulators to understand and address the causes of the event, and to ensure they don't happen again."

Indeed, this is the "happen again" portion of Boeing's safety issues with the 737 Max line. We have witnessed the result of this long-standing lack of factory oversight in the airline industry before. The crashes of Indonesian Lion Air Flight 610 in 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in 2019, both Boeing 737 Max 8 planes, together killed 346 people and led to significant international litigation against the company. A whistleblower, in the right place at the right time, may very well have prevented the technical problems with the stabilizing feature that led to these crashes.

While these safety failures back then and now in 2024 should never have progressed to this point, this is a key moment for whistleblowers to be heard. There are real questions about the critical safety issues that have flown under the radar for too long, and somebody, at an aircraft manufacturer, at a federal agency, knows the true story of how we arrived here and what needs to change.

Whistleblowers should also know that the law protects them—including the FAA Voluntary Safety Reporting Program— to ensure employees can safely speak up.

I urge anyone who may be able to shed light on these critical safety issues to blow the whistle. Doing so may just save lives, and in the absence of meaningful regulatory action from the FAA, our safety requires that brave people come forward and tell us what they know.

DEMS

From page 8

"national unity" must realize that "you and me" includes everyone.

Biden and Co. can get with the program and start paying attention to all Americans, not just the progressive blue-staters, or be in for a very rough November night in 2024.

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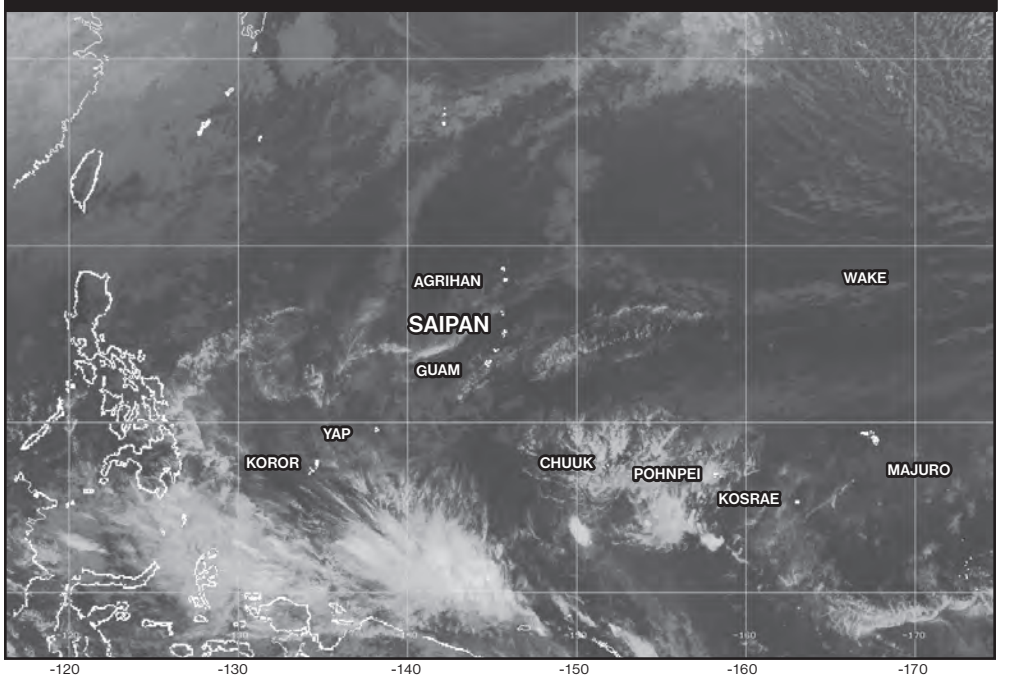
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly sunny with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly sunny with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 / 76°	86 / 76°	86 / 76°	86 / 76°	86 / 76°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:26 AM MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows partly sunny skies and isolated showers moving through the Marianas Waters. The buoys reveal combined seas of 8 to 10 feet, composed mainly of north swell with a small east swell and some wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	83° / 77°
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	84° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:47 AM	6:10 PM
Wednesday	6:47 AM	6:10 PM
Thursday	6:47 AM	6:11 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:11 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	4:35 AM	3:54 PM
Wednesday	-	5:30 AM	4:50 PM
Thursday	-	6:20 AM	5:45 PM
Friday	-	7:06 AM	6:38 PM
Saturday	-	7:48 AM	7:29 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	83° / 70°
Beijing	Fair	24° / 13°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	68° / 58°
Honolulu	Cloudy	77° / 71°
London	Showers	47° / 35°
Los Angeles	Sunny	71° / 52°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	89° / 78°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	87° / 60°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	75° / 64°
New York	Fair	32° / 20°
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	56° / 46°
Paris	Rain/Wind	53° / 32°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	49° /33°
Rome	Showers	58° / 52°
Salem	Showers	59° / 52°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	59° / 48°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	39° / 15°
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	56° / 45°
Washington, DC	Fair	34° / 21°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:13 AM	Low Tide	-0.48
7:46 AM	High Tide	1.59
12:44 PM	Low Tide	1.16
5:12 PM	High Tide	1.60

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Recovering from natural disasters is slow and bureaucratic

» New FEMA rules aim to cut the red tape

AP

Jake Sullivan, U.S. National Security Advisor, speaks during the Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Anyone who has lived through a natural disaster and then applied to the federal government for assistance knows that it can be a lengthy, frustrating and bureaucratic process. New rules announced Friday by the federal agency in charge of emergency management aim to simplify and speed up the process.

With natural disasters now affecting more people across the United States, insurance markets in many states are buckling under the weight of payouts to those hit by wildfires and hurricanes.

Deanne Criswell, who heads the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said the changes, going into effect in March, are designed to make it easier for disaster survivors to get help—a challenge for those often struggling to recover from the worst day of their lives.

"Mother Nature is not letting up," Criswell said to reporters on a call announcing the changes. "We need to be better prepared and better informed to recover from natural disasters faster and more effectively."

Criswell described the changes as the "most comprehensive update to our individual assistance program in 20 years." She said the changes were the result of a huge amount of feedback from survivors, organizations that work in disaster recovery, and elected officials.

Here are some of the changes outlined by FEMA:

HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS WITH NOT ENOUGH INSURANCE

Under previous rules, homeowners who had received payments from their insurance company for home repairs but not enough to cover all of the damage were essentially out of luck when it came to getting help from FEMA. Now those homeowners can apply to FEMA for help. Criswell gave an example of a homeowner who has $80,000 in damage but receives only $45,000 from the insurance company. Previously, FEMA couldn't help them because their insurance payout already exceeded the agency's assistance cap of $42,500 per disaster. Now, that homeowner can get money from the agency to make up the difference. This rule change comes at a time when homeowners in places like Louisiana, Florida and California are facing skyrocketing deductibles and fights with insurance companies over damage assessments that have made it difficult even for people with insurance to recover from hurricanes or wildfires.

Samantha L. Montano, an assistant professor of emergency management at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, called this change a "pretty massive internal shift" and questioned why it hadn't been done before. She said survivors are increasingly receiving estimates from insurance companies that are much lower than the cost of repairs or inspectors saying that the damage was pre-existing and as such not covered. That leaves homeowners increasingly in the position that they have to sue their insurance company or figure out how to make up the difference on their own.

GETTING RID OF THE LOAN RULE

Under previous rules, disaster survivors first had to apply for a loan with the Small Business Administration and get rejected before they could apply for FEMA assistance. Criswell said survivors found the SBA application requirement "confusing and challenging," so the agency is eliminating that requirement.

Al Cathey, who was mayor of Mexico Beach, Florida, when Hurricane Michael leveled almost every building in the Panhandle beach town in 2018, said he welcomed the changes given the bureaucracy and paperwork he encountered when he went to apply for an SBA loan for his destroyed hardware store.

After going to a trailer where SBA workers handed him a large packet of papers, and seeing how many people he would have to be interviewed by to get the loan, he decided it wasn't worth it even though he was about $200,000 short of the money needed to reopen the store.

"I got frustrated with them myself. I didn't want to get involved with all that government red tape," Cathey said Friday. "I understand the need for guidelines and policies, but, my God, the paperwork they wanted from me to start the approval process. This was a disaster, but you would think they thought I wanted the money for a vacation."

CHANGES TO CRITICAL NEEDS ASSISTANCE

The agency has had something called critical needs assistance, currently $750, that survivors can use for whatever they need right after a disaster: baby formula or food, for example. But states or tribal nations had to specifically request that category of assistance, and it was only done on a case-by-case basis. Now, anytime a disaster is declared that includes FEMA's individual assistance funding stream, those $750 payments will be available. Survivors still have to apply, and there is some vetting to prevent fraud. But it bypasses the application that states and tribal nations had to make. That doesn't mean that every disaster will include these payments. Many declared disasters are more limited in scope.

OTHER CHANGES

Disaster survivors with disabilities can use FEMA money to make changes to their homes to make them more accessible, whereas under previous rules the agency would only pay to rebuild things that had been damaged in the disaster. People with pre-existing problems in their home, like a leaky roof, can now get money from the agency to fix the house. Currently, the agency requires that if it is giving people money to fix something, it had to have worked before the disaster.

And FEMA is creating a new category of aid called displacement assistance, designed to help those who can't return to their home. It gives them money for housing while they're looking for a long-term rental and has flexibility so that they can, for example, use the money to pay a friend's utilities if they're crashing on a couch.

Zack Rosenburg, the cofounder and CEO of St. Bernard Project, which does recovery work across the country, said the changes are a "step in the right direction." He said the vast majority of people their organization works with in the wake of natural disasters "hate" asking the government for help.

"For some, they see it as humiliating. For some, they see it as anathema or inconsistent in who they are. They just don't like doing it," he said.

And then when they do, they encounter a "maze" of requests for information.

He particularly praised the changes getting rid of the mandatory SBA application, efforts to simplify the application process and the changes allowing FEMA money even if people had preexisting problems with their homes: "This will allow more resilient rebuilding."

But, he said, the details of how the changes are communicated to people will be crucial, and he suggested other things that would help such as making the changes retroactive to people who already have claims in the pipeline. He said the SBP has also been pushing for years for one application that can be used to apply for FEMA, SBA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which funds longer-term recoveries.

Overall, Montano said, these are all "good and needed changes, but we still need to do more." Like any new government policy, it depends on how things play out once the policies go into effect. And, she said, there's likely still room to improve things like the appeal process or giving survivors more time to apply for aid. And, she noted, FEMA is one part—albeit an important part—of disaster recovery. She said Congress needs to step in to increase the cap on individual assistance to disaster survivors and there needs to be more oversight of the insurance industry.

The new rules go into effect March 22. The changes are expected to cost $671 million per year, with $159 million of that borne by the states and tribal nations where the disasters occur.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Ford cuts production of F-150 Lightning pickup on weaker-than-expected electric vehicle sales growth

Ford is cutting production of the F-150 Lightning electric pickup after weaker-than-expected electric vehicle sales growth. While EV sales are growing in the U.S., the pace is falling well short of the industry's ambitious timetable and many consumers are turning to hybrid vehicles instead. Ford sold just over 24,000 Lightnings last year, up 55% from 2022. But dealers are reporting slower sales and rising inventories on the electric truck, which starts at just under $50,000. Electric vehicle sales overall grew 47% to a record 1.19 million last year, according to Motorintelligence.com. The EV market share grew from 5.8% in 2022 to 7.6% last year. But EV sales growth slowed toward the end of the year. In December, they rose 34%. Ford said that about 1,400 workers will be affected by the move to lower F-150 Lightning production, with the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center transitioning to one shift, effective April 1.

Microsoft says state-backed Russian hackers accessed emails of senior leadership team members

BOSTON (AP)—State-backed Russian hackers broke into Microsoft's corporate email system and accessed the accounts of members of the company's leadership team, as well as those of employees on its cybersecurity and legal teams, the company said Friday. In a blog post, Microsoft said the intrusion began in late November and was discovered on Jan. 12. It said the same highly skilled Russian hacking team behind the SolarWinds breach was responsible. "A very small percentage" of Microsoft corporate accounts were accessed, the company said, and some emails and attached documents were stolen. A company spokesperson said Microsoft had no immediate comment on which or how many members of its senior leadership had their email accounts breached. In a regulatory filing Friday, Microsoft said it was able to remove the hackers' access from the compromised accounts on or about Jan. 13. "We are in the process of notifying employees whose email was accessed," Microsoft said, adding that its investigation indicates the hackers were initially targeting email accounts for information related to their activities.

Los Angeles Times guild stages a 1-day walkout in protest of anticipated layoffs

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Guild members of the *Los Angeles Times* walked off the job Friday to protest what it says are imminent layoffs, the first newsroom union work stoppage in the newspaper's 143-year history. The paper's journalists and their supporters rallied in an LA civic center park, chanting and waving signs that read, "Don't Cut Our Future." The guild said members would also protest in other cities. The guild said in a statement that the *Times* is planning to lay off a "significant" number of journalists, but that the union cannot specify the number because management has insisted on negotiating in meetings that are off the record. The guild also said the paper wants to gut seniority protections. Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong, a biotech billionaire, acquired the *Times* in 2018, returning it to local ownership two decades after it was sold to Tribune Co. The purchase raised hopes after years of cutbacks, circulation declines and leadership changes. Last week, Executive Editor Kevin Merida abruptly left after a 2 1/2-year tenure. In June, more than 70 positions—about 13% of the newsroom—were cut. A Times' representative told the paper that revenue projections were under review and expenses were being carefully examined. "We need to reduce our operating budget going into this year and anticipate layoffs," spokeswoman Hillary Manning said in a statement.

Nation

DeSantis ends struggling presidential bid, endorses Trump

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP)—Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis suspended his Republican presidential campaign on Sunday, ending his 2024 White House bid just before the New Hampshire primary while endorsing his bitter rival Donald Trump.

The decision leaves Trump and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley as the last major candidates remaining in the race ahead of Tuesday's New Hampshire primary. This is the scenario Trump's foes in the GOP have long sought, raising the stakes for this week's contest as the party's last chance to stop the former president who has so far dominated the race.

But as some Trump critics cheered, DeSantis nodded toward Trump's primary dominance—and attacked Haley—in an exit video he posted on social media.

"It's clear to me that a majority of Republican primary voters want to give Donald Trump another chance," DeSantis said in the straight-to-camera video, delivered in a cheerful tone.

He continued: "I signed a pledge to support the Republican nominee and I will honor that pledge. He has my endorsement because we can't go back to the old Republican guard of yesteryear, a repackaged form of warmed-over corporatism that Nikki Haley represents."

Haley spoke at a campaigning stop in Seabrook, New Hampshire, just as DeSantis announced his decision.

AP

Republican presidential candidate Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks to supporters during a caucus night party, Jan. 15, 2024, in West Des Moines, Iowa.

"He ran a great race, he's been a good governor, and we wish him well," she told a room packed with supporters and media. "Having said that, it's now one fella and one lady left."

DeSantis' decision, while perhaps not surprising given his 30-point blowout loss last week in Iowa, marks the end of an extraordinary decline for a high-profile governor once thought to be a legitimate threat to Trump's supremacy in the Republican Party. After months of contentious exchanges, Trump struck a more conciliatory tone late Sunday during a rally in Rochester, New Hampshire, calling DeSantis a "really terrific person."

"I also look forward to working with Ron" to win the general election, Trump said.

DeSantis entered the 2024 presidential contest with major advantages in his quest to take on Trump, and early primary polls suggested DeSantis was in a strong position to do just that. He and his allies amassed a political fortune well in excess of $130 million, and he boasted a significant legislative record on issues important to many conservatives, like abortion and the teaching of race and gender issues in schools.

Such advantages did not survive the reality of presidential politics in 2024. From a high-profile announcement that was plagued by technical glitches to constant upheavals to his staff and campaign strategy, DeSantis struggled to find his footing in the primary. He lost the Iowa caucuses—which he had vowed to win—by 30 percentage points to Trump.

DeSantis' allies said that private discussions began shortly after Iowa to decide how to bow out of the race gracefully.

The Florida governor notified top donors and supporters of his decision through a series of phone conversations and text messages between senior campaign officials to top donors and supporters on Sunday afternoon, according to two people who received such communications. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose the private conversations.

DeSantis had returned to Florida by then after a roller-coaster weekend that included stops in South Carolina ahead of an event in New Hampshire Sunday evening that was ultimately canceled. The campaign also canceled a series of national television appearances earlier in the day, blaming the cancelation on a miscommunication with DeSantis' super PAC.

DeSantis was physically worn after spending weeks on the campaign with little, if any, time off, even as he stormed across frigid Iowa and New Hampshire, often without a winter coat.

He ultimately decided that he needed to endorse Trump given his popularity in the party despite the deeply personal feud between them.

Democrats believe abortion will motivate voters in 2024

WASHINGTON (AP)—When Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump said recently that he was "proud" to have a hand in overturning the abortion protections enshrined in *Roe v. Wade*, Democratic pollster Celinda Lake took it as a political gift, thinking to herself, "Oh my God, we just won the election."

It may not be that simple, but as the 2024 race heats up, President Joe Biden's campaign is betting big on abortion rights as a major driver for Democrats in the election. Republicans are still trying to figure out how to talk about the issue, if at all, and avoid a political backlash.

"A vote for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is a vote to restore *Roe*, and a vote for Donald Trump is a vote to ban abortion across the country," said Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Biden's campaign manager. "These are the stakes in 2024."

Since *Roe* was overturned in 2022, voters have pushed back by approving a number of statewide ballot initiatives to preserve or expand the right to abortion. Support for abortion rights drove women to the polls during the 2022 midterm elections, delivering Democrats unexpected success. For many people, the issue took on higher meaning, part of an overarching concern about the future of democracy, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 94,000 voters in the midterm elections.

Democrats have since worked to broaden how they talk to voters about the Supreme Court's decision, delivered by a conservative majority that included three justices nominated by Trump, and what it means for people's access to health care and their personal freedoms.

The Biden campaign is launching a nationwide political push this coming week centered on Monday's 51st anniversary of the 1973 decision that codified abortion rights. Vice President Kamala Harris, the administration's chief messenger on this, will hold the first event Monday in Wisconsin.

On Tuesday, Biden, Harris, first lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Doug Emhoff head to Virginia for a campaign stop focused on the issue. More events featuring top Democrats in battleground states are also in the works.

The campaign on Sunday released a advertising campaign scheduled to run all week, including during "The Bachelor" season premiere and the NFL conference championships. The spot features Dr. Austin Dennard, an OB-GYN in Texas who had to leave her state to get an abortion when she learned that her baby had a fatal condition called anencephaly.

"In Texas, you are forced to carry that pregnancy, and that is because of Donald Trump overturning *Roe v. Wade*," she said.

Focusing on abortion will not be a silver bullet for Democrats. The economy, foreign policy, immigration and inflation are major issues, too, as is concern about Biden's age as he tries to overcome low poll numbers. Many voters are simply turned off by the prospect of a likely 2024 Trump-Biden rematch.

Still, Democrats believe abortion will be a key motivator for base voters and help expand their coalition. Biden aides and allies point to recent elections that have overwhelmingly shown that, when voters can choose, they have chosen to safeguard abortion rights.

The issue isn't vanishing from the headlines anytime soon, either. The Supreme Court will decide whether to restrict access to medication prescribed for abortion and to treat other reproductive issues. And there is an ongoing stream of stories about the impact of abortion bans, such as the mother who had to sue, then flee, her home state to end her doomed pregnancy.

Democrats spent decades trying to calibrate their message, always defending the right to choose while also making overtures to voters who are conflicted about the issue. President Bill Clinton's mantra was that abortion should be "safe, legal and rare."

EPA: Almost no improvement in river, stream nitrogen pollution

ST. LOUIS (AP)—The nation's rivers and streams remain stubbornly polluted with nutrients that contaminate drinking water and fuel a gigantic dead zone for aquatic life in the Gulf of Mexico, according to a recently released Environmental Protection Agency assessment.

It's a difficult problem that's concentrated in agricultural regions that drain into the Mississippi River. More than half of the basin's miles of rivers and streams were in poor condition for nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizer that drains into waterways, the agency found. For decades, federal and state officials have struggled to control farm runoff, the biggest source of nutrient pollution that is not typically federally regulated.

It's a problem only expected to get harder to control as climate change produces more intense storms that dump rain on the Midwest and South. Those heavy rains flood farm fields, pick up commercial fertilizers and carry them into nearby rivers.

"It's really worrying that we are clearly not meeting the goals that we've set for ourselves," said Olivia Dorothy, director of river restoration with the conservation group American Rivers.

The assessment is based on samples collected in 2018 and 2019 and it allows experts to compare river conditions from previous rounds of sampling, although different sampling sites were used. It takes years for the agency to compile the results and release the report, which is the most comprehensive assessment of the nation's river and stream health. Phosphorus levels dipped slightly while nitrogen levels remained almost exactly the same.

About half of all river miles were found to be in poor condition for snails, worms, beetles and other bottom dwelling species that are an important indicator of biological health of the river. About a third were also rated as having poor conditions for fish based on species diversity.

"Controlling pollution is a big job. It is hard work," said Tom Wall, director of watershed restoration, assessment and protection division at EPA. "Things are not getting worse, despite the tremendous pressures on our waterways. And we would like to see more progress."

Water pollution from factories and industry is typically federally regulated. The Biden administration recently proposed toughening regulations on meat and poultry processing plants to reduce pollution, Wall said.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Landslide in mountainous southwestern China buries 47 people

BEIJING (AP)—A landslide in southwestern China's mountainous Yunnan province early Monday buried 47 people and forced the evacuation of 200 more amid freezing temperatures and falling snow. The disaster struck just before 6 a.m. in the village of Liangshui in the northeastern part of Yunnan province. Rescue efforts were underway to find victims buried in 18 separate houses, the Zhenxiong county publicity department said. There were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries. The cause of the landslide wasn't immediately known, although photos showed snow was on the ground and continuing to fall.

Luo Dongmei, 35, was sleeping when the landslide struck, but she survived and was relocated to a school by local authorities. "I was asleep, but my brother knocked on the door and woke me up. They said there was a landslide and the bed was shaking, so they rushed upstairs and woke us up," Luo said. Luo, her husband and their three children, along with many other residents, have been provided with food at the school but are still waiting for blankets and other protection from the cold weather, she said. Luo said she's been unable to contact her sister and aunt, who lived closer to the site of the landslide. "The only thing I can do is to wait," she said.

Taiwan says 6 Chinese balloons flew through its airspace; warplanes, ships also detected

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Taiwan said Monday that six Chinese balloons either flew over the island or through airspace just north of it, while Chinese warplanes and navy ships were also detected in the area. The dispatch of such balloons, which generally disappear into the Pacific to the east, appears to be on the rise, though their purpose has not been publicly announced. The Defense Ministry noted the balloon sightings on a list of Chinese People's Liberation Army activity in the waters and airspace around Taiwan. One passed near the southern city of Pingtung, while the others flew just north of the port of Keelung, where Taiwan has an important naval base. It remains unclear whether the balloons have an explicit military function, but they appear to be part of a campaign of harassment against the self-governed island, which China claims as its own territory and has vowed to reclaim by force if necessary. In the U.S. early lasst year, President Joe Biden vowed sharper rules to track, monitor and potentially shoot down unknown aerial objects after a three-week drama sparked by the discovery of a suspected Chinese spy balloon transiting much of the United States.

India's Modi set to open controversial temple in Ayodhya in grand event months before polls

AYODHYA, India (AP)—Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday was set to open a contentious Hindu temple built on the ruins of an ancient mosque in the holy city of Ayodhya. The grand event, which will be attended by thousands, is expected to benefit the Indian leader in the polls just months before a general election. The inauguration of the temple, which is still under construction, is dedicated to Hinduism's most revered deity Lord Ram. It fulfills a demand made by millions of Hindus for over 100 years and delivers on a crucial campaign pledge from Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. Ayodhya, once dotted with tightly packed houses and rundown stalls, has undergone an elaborate makeover in the lead up to the inauguration. Narrow roads have been turned into a four-lane pilgrimage route leading to the temple, tourists are arriving at a new airport and sprawling railway station, and major hotel chains are building new properties.On Monday morning, the mood in the city was jubilant. Devotees from across the country have arrived to celebrate the opening, with groups of them dancing to religious songs that blare from speakers on roads bedecked with flowers. Huge cut-outs of Lord Ram and billboards of Modi are ubiquitous across Ayodhya, where the borders have been sealed to prevent more people from coming in. Some 20,000 security personn

Indonesia's Mount Merapi unleashes lava as other volcanoes flare up, forcing thousands to evacuate

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Indonesia's Mount Merapi erupted Sunday, spreading searing gas clouds and avalanches of lava down its slopes as other active volcanoes flared up across the country, forcing the evacuation of thousands. On the densely populated island of Java, Merapi unleashed clouds of hot ash and a mixture of rock, and lava that traveled up to 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) down its slopes, said Agus Budi Santoso, the head of Indonesia's Geological Disaster Technology Research and Development Center. A column of hot clouds blasted 100 meters (about 109 yards) into the air as ash blanketed several villages without casualties, he added. Merapi is the most active out of more than 120 volcanoes across the country. Sunday's eruption is the latest since authorities raised its alert level to the second-highest in November 2020 after sensors picked up increasing activity. Residents living on the slopes were advised to stay 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) away from the crater's mouth and be aware of possible threats from flowing lava. In 2010, an eruption killed 347 people and displaced 20,000 villagers. The 2,968-meter (9,737-foot) mountain is about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from Yogyakarta, an ancient center of Javanese culture and the seat of royal dynasties going back centuries. About a quarter million people live within 10 kilometers (6 miles) of the volcano. Several other active volcanoes also blew up this weekend, prompting authorities to evacuate thousands of residents, said Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation in a statement released on social media platform X, formerly Twitter. No casualties were reported, it said. The agency said Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki in East Nusa Tenggara province spewed hot clouds as high as 700 meters (2,300 feet) into the air on Sunday, as more than 6,500 people fled to shelters. Also on Sunday, Mount Marapi in West Sumatra province erupted again, its third biggest flare-up this month, albeit without discharging lava. About 500 residents living near it were evacuated. Last month, it erupted, killing 23 climbers and injuring several others. Mount Semeru in East Java province released searing gas clouds and rivers of lava on Saturday, as did Mount Ibu on Halmahera island in North Maluku province which shot a column of hot ashes as high as 1,300 meters (4,265 feet) into the air.

World

Palestinian death toll in Gaza surpasses 25K

AP

Relatives and supporters of the Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group attend a protest calling for their release outside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence, in Jerusalem, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024.

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP)—The Palestinian death toll from the war between Israel and Hamas has soared past 25,000, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said Sunday, while Israel announced the death of another hostage and appeared far from achieving its goals of freeing more than 100 others and crushing the militant group.

The war's deaths, destruction and displacement are without precedent in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The war has divided Israelis while the offensive threatens to ignite a wider conflict involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen that support the Palestinians.

Furious with the Israeli government and demanding the release of remaining hostages, relatives and others set up a tent camp outside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem and vowed to stay until a deal is reached.

Netanyahu, in a defiant new statement, said he stressed in his conversation Friday with U.S. President Joe Biden that he rejects Hamas demands for a cease-fire, Israeli forces' withdrawal and the release of Palestinians held by Israel in exchange for the remaining hostages. He said that agreeing means another devastating Hamas attack "would only be a matter of time."

Netanyahu also rejects calls from U.S, its closest ally, for postwar plans that would include a path to Palestinian statehood. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the refusal to accept a two-state solution unacceptable.

"The Middle East is a tinderbox. We must do all we can to prevent conflict igniting across the region," Guterres added. "And that starts with an immediate humanitarian cease-fire to relieve the suffering in Gaza."

GAZA DEATH TOLL CLIMBS

The war began with Hamas' attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7. Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 250 hostages back to Gaza.

Israel's military announced the death of 19-year-old Sgt. Shay Levinson, who was among the hostages. His date of death was given as Oct. 7, but there were no further details. According to Israeli media, his body is still in Gaza.

At least 27 people reported killed in attack on Donetsk in Russian-occupied Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Moscow-installed officials said Ukrainian shelling killed at least 27 people and wounded 25 on Sunday at a market on the outskirts of Donetsk, a Russian-occupied city in the eastern part of the country.

Among the injured in the suburb of Tekstilshchik were two children, said Denis Pushilin, the local leader.

Ukrainian officials in Kyiv did not comment on the incident, and the claims could not be independently verified by The Associated Press. Both sides have increasingly relied on longer-range attacks this winter amid largely unchanged positions on the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line in the nearly 2-year-old war.

The artillery shells that hit the area had been fired from the area of Kurakhove and Krasnohorivka to the west, Pushilin said, adding that emergency services responded to the scene.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "strongly condemns all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including today's shelling of the city of Donetsk in Ukraine," according to a U.N. spokesperson, adding that all such attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law.

Donetsk is one of four regions in Ukraine that Russia annexed illegally in 2022, months after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion.

Russia's Foreign Ministry also blamed Ukraine and described the strike as a "terrorist attack."

Also on Sunday, a fire broke out at a chemical transport terminal at Russia's Ust-Luga port following two explosions, regional officials said. Local media said the Baltic Sea port, 165 kilometers (about 100 miles) southwest of St. Petersburg, had been attacked by Ukrainian drones, causing a gas tank to explode.

Overdrive

SUBARU
The 2024 Subaru Crosstrek Wilderness.

THE 2024 SUBARU CROSSTREK WILDERNESS

Riding high through the polar vortex

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service

With most of the nation dealing with the polar vortex and the frigid, unforgiving weather that goes with it, the idea of having the new 2024 Subaru Crosstrek Wilderness in your driveway seems like a wise choice in automotive transportation — to an extent.

For the Crosstrek's donor is the Subaru Impreza, albeit one that's been jacked up an additional 4.2 inches and wearing all-terrain tires. This might not seem like a big deal. But given there are parts of the South that rarely, if ever see snow, let alone a snow plow, this past week's glacial weather makes a vehicle with 9.3 inches of ground clearance appealing, even if some have a pickup jacked up far more than that.

For the Crosstrek Wilderness is a subcompact all-wheel-drive beastie that can tackle dirt, rocks or unplowed stretches of macadam with equal aplomb. So too can the Impreza; it just doesn't have the height, mechanical upgrades or presence that its off-road sibling does.

So yes, the Crosstrek Wilderness is powered by the same 2.5-liter horizontally opposed four-cylinder engine and continuously variable transmission with all-wheel drive used in the Impreza. But there are some important differences beyond ground clearance.

It starts with a wardrobe update. The front and rear bumpers have been reworked alongside larger wheel arch cladding. Subaru's trademark hexagonal grille wears a more assertive demeanor, nestled between LED fog lights and an anti-glare, matte-black hood decal, a body-color roof spoiler and black side mirrors with integrated turn signals. There's even a front aluminum skid plate to protect undercarriage components.

NUTS & BOLTS

- **Base price**: $32,195
- **Engine**: 2.5-liter horizontally-opposed four-cylinder engine
- **Horsepower/Torque**: 182/178 pound-feet
- **EPA fuel economy (city/highway)**: 26/33 mpg
- **Length/Width/Height**: 176.4/70.9/63 inches
- **Ground clearance**: 9.3 inches
- **Payload**: 1,448 pounds
- **Cargo capacity**: 20-54.7 cubic feet
- **Towing capacity**: 3,500 pounds

Like the best outdoor winter gear, it signals the proper intention. But it's not attractive. Subarus rarely are. But is it functional? Yes, and that's what makes it beautiful.

The Wilderness isn't all power and paint. It functions like the off-road nugget that it is, with a roof rack that can handle 165 pounds at speed and 700 pounds when stationary, making it perfect for cartop camping. And should you wonder about the greasy bits, you'll find that engineers have tinkered there as well. There's a revised 4.111 final drive differential ratio for climbing steep slopes along with a retuned transmission that helps provide superior grip at low speeds. And it boasts higher capabilities than any Crosstrek, with a 20-degree approach angle, 33-degree departure angle and a 21.1-degree ramp breakover angle.

Subaru's dual-function X-Mode is incorporated into the all-wheel-drive system, and provides a number of modes that adjusts the engine and transmission response. They include the ones you'd expect, like Snow, Dirt and Deep Snow and Mud common to all Crosstreks. But the Crosstrek Wilderness also has a Low Speed / Low Ratio Gradient Control mode that activates on inclines at low speeds, while shifting the transmission to its lowest ratio, 4.066:1. This makes it an epic tool for off-road work.

Then there's the usual blizzard of standard driver-assistance technologies, including blind-spot detection with lane change assist and rear cross-traffic alert, lane departure alert, sway warning, adaptive cruise control, automatic emergency steering, reverse automatic braking, pre-collision braking, pre-collision throttle management, and lead vehicle start alert.

Like many buyers of this vehicle, I didn't venture off-road for my test drive. The Crosstrek Wilderness didn't even make it into the snow. It did traverse biblical downpours, where it proves to be secure, solid and steadfast. And as you'd expect with any true off-road warrior, the vehicle's off-road articulation translates into softer handling and a comfy ride on-road. Its tires don't seem intrusive as they do on other mudslingers, providing a sense of civilization to the proceedings, although you might wish for sharper steering feel.

Yet as far off the beaten path you may travel, the Crosstrek Wilderness' 11.6-inch touchscreen, USB ports, and Apple CarPlay and Android Auto will keep you in touch.

So, no matter what Old Man Winter may throw at you, you'll get through. After all, it's a Subaru; a car that laughs at polar vortexes.

Trouble with front license plates

Q: I enjoy reading your column in the Sunday Boston Herald. Here in Massachusetts, front registration plates are the law. Not all motor vehicles are designed to mount the front registration plates, so dealers attach a bracket to the front bumper or some other place for the plate. Number one, it looks like hell. Number two, it usually gets mangled. So why do so many states require front number plates when most vehicles are not designed to accept them?

H.H., Melrose, Massachusetts

A: Since there are only a few states that don't require front plates, most cars have dimples where holes are to be drilled and brackets installed. Yes, on many cars the plates detract from the beauty and some drivers just leave them off. I see tons of Teslas and hundreds of other high-end cars without front tags. Confession: I was once pulled over and said that the tag may have come off in a car wash. The cop took a look and then said, "We police may not be Rhodes (road) scholars, but there aren't even any holes in your bumper." I got the message.

■■■

Q: I'm with those who think the push button start is highly annoying and ought to be an option. The push button allows my wife to take the key away in her purse and then if I drive off some distance to do another errand, I can't start the car again. The computer chip key costs upwards of $200 and can only be reproduced by a dealer and the nearest is 50 miles away. Of course, my car has another, very effective, anti-theft device: It has stick shift. Few thieves can drive a stick shift.

G.W., Deltaville, Virginia

A: Many locksmiths now carry popular fobs and can also program them. Sure, both the fob and programming are expensive, but the locksmith is usually cheaper than the dealership. Maybe you could ask your wife to leave the key fob with the car or you could carry your own fob. It won't get locked inside; grab it when you exit.

DREAMSTIME
Since there are only a few states that don't require front plates, most cars have dimples where holes are to be drilled and brackets installed. Yes, on many cars the plates detract from the beauty and some drivers just leave them off.

■■■

Q: Regarding cleaning windshield interiors, thanks to YouTube I found the best solution. Wipe the interior down with a microfiber towel, then wash it by wiping up and down then side to side with a damp Mr. Clean Magic Eraser. Then dry with a microfiber cloth. I finish it up with a clean microfiber towel and Stoner's Invisible Glass, which is the best glass cleaner I have ever used. I've tried everything else: newspaper, different glass cleaners, etc.

M.K., Chicago

A: I'll give it a try. The last time I went through the car wash, I swear that the attendant used the same rag on my windshield as for the tire shine. Ugh.

■■■

Q: I have looked at the AAA research on Top Tier gas being recommended by many different car companies. The Consumer Reports review suggests to use Top Tier gas. Can you please advise on your recommendation for using Top Tier gas in the tank?

R.L., Bartlett, Illinois

A: The Top Tier gas designation was created by BMW along with several other automakers and awarded to gasolines that had more than the paltry minimum amount of detergent required by the U.S. EPA. I do recommend it. The higher dose of detergent helps keep intake valves free of buildup. It is still useful to use Top Tier gas and there should be a label on the gas pumps at the stations. You can find a list of marketers at toptiergas.com.

MOTORMOUTH

BY BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including Consumer Guide *and* Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Life & Style

‘Mean Girls’ fetches $11.7M in second weekend to stay No. 1

By JAKE COYLE
AP FILM WRITER

JOJO WHILDEN/PARAMOUNT VIA AP

This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Avantika, from left, Angourie Rice, Renee Rapp and Bebe Wood in a scene from “Mean Girls.”

NEW YORK (AP)—On a quiet weekend in movie theaters, “Mean Girls” repeated atop the box office with $11.7 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday, while a handful of awards contenders sought to make an impact ahead of Oscar nominations Tuesday.

With a dearth of new releases in cinemas, Paramount Pictures’ Tina Fey-scripted musical “Mean Girls” pushed its two-week total past $50 million, along with $16.2 million internationally. So far, it’s outpacing the tally for the 2004 original “Mean Girls.”

Only one new film debuted in wide release: “I.S.S.,” a modestly budgeted sci-fi thriller starring Ariana DeBose. The film, which speculates what would happen aboard the International Space Station if war broke out between the U.S. and Russia, debuted with $3 million on 2,518 screens for Bleecker Street.

Expectations weren’t high for “I.S.S.,” which drew only so-so reviews and was lightly marketed. Audiences also didn’t like it, giving the film a “C-” CinemaScore.

But even for January, historically a low ebb for moviegoing, it was a sparsely attended weekend, with paltry options on the big screen. The top 10 films collectively accounted for just $51.3 million in box office, according to Comscore.

With a similarly thin release schedule on deck for next weekend, it could be the start of a chastening trend for Hollywood in 2024. Due to production delays caused by last year’s strikes, there are significant holes throughout this year’s movie calendar.

The Jason Statham thriller “The Beekeeper,” from Amazon MGM Studios, remained in second place, grossing $8.5 million in its second weekend to bring its total to $31.1 million. Warner Bros. “Wonka,” six weeks into its smash run in theaters, was third, with $6.4 million in ticket sales. It’s taken in $187.2 million domestically.

Also continuing to leg out was Sony Pictures’ “Anyone But You.” The rom-com starring Sydney Sweeney and Glen Powell, crossed $100 million globally in its fifth week of release. It’s the highest grossing R-rated romantic comedy—a genre that has largely migrated to streaming platforms—since 2016’s “Bridget Jones’s Baby.” Domestically, it came in fourth with $5.4 million.

Much of the weekend’s action was in expanding awards contenders.

After a qualifying release in December, Ava DuVernay’s “Origin,” starring Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor as the “Caste” author Isabel Wilkerson, launched in 125 theaters and pulled in $875,000—a strong start for the acclaimed film.

Yorgos Lanthimos’ dark fantasy “Poor Things,” starring Emma Stone, added 820 theaters and grossed $2 million from 1,400 locations. The Searchlight Pictures release, which won the Golden Globe for best comedy-musical, has earned $33.7 million globally in seven weeks of slowly expanding release.

- “Mean Girls,” $11.7 million.
- “The Beekeeper,” $8.5 million.
- “Wonka,” $6.4 million.
- “Anyone But You,” $5.4 million.
- “Migration,” $5.3 million.
- “Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom,” $3.7 million.
- “I.S.S.,” $3 million.
- “Night Swim,” $2.7 million.
- “The Boys in the Boat,” $2.5 million.
- 10. “Poor Things,” $2 million.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Sarah, the Duchess of York, diagnosed with malignant melanoma found during breast cancer treatment

LONDON (AP)—Sarah, the Duchess of York, has been diagnosed with a malignant skin cancer that was discovered during her treatment for breast cancer, a spokesperson said. The melanoma was found after several moles were removed while she was undergoing reconstructive surgery after a mastectomy. Doctors are analyzing it to see if it was caught early.

“Clearly, another diagnosis so soon after treatment for breast cancer has been distressing but the Duchess remains in good spirits,” the spokesperson said. Sarah, 64, the ex-wife of Prince Andrew and the mother of Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie was once a favorite target of Britain’s tabloids. The former Sarah Ferguson, known as “Fergie,” has published her memoirs and authored a number of children’s books as well as a historical romance for adults. The announcement came five days after dual health announcements in Britain’s royal family. Kate, the Princess of Wales, had abdominal surgery and King Charles III is due this week to have prostate treatment.

Man arrested near Taylor Swift’s NYC townhouse after reported break-in attempt

NEW YORK (AP)—Taylor Swift’s townhouse in New York City appears to have been the target of another break-in attempt, this time by a man who was arrested near the singer’s Tribeca home Saturday as police responded to a report of a disorderly person. Witnesses said the man tried but failed to enter the townhouse in the early afternoon, the New York Post reported. Police would not confirm a break-in attempt at Swift’s home, but officers arrested a man on the same street when they were told he tried to open a door to a building, an NYPD spokesperson said Sunday. The man was charged on an unrelated 2017 warrant out of Brooklyn for allegedly failing to answer a summons, the spokesperson said. Authorities did not release the man’s name. An email seeking comment was sent Sunday to a representative for the “You Belong With Me” singer. It wasn’t clear if she was at the home at the time. She traveled Sunday to the Buffalo, New York, area, where her boyfriend, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, was set to play against the Buffalo Bills in an NFL playoff game in the evening.

Baby’s arrival exposes deep fissures in family

DEAR ABBY: My stepdaughter, “Zoe,” has recently had her first baby and we are very excited. She lives far away. My husband, “Karl,” is taking the trip, but I have to stay because my elderly mother is living with us. I asked family to stay with Mom, but they’re involved in their busy lives, and Mom clings to me.

While I called to congratulate other relatives on becoming new aunts, etc., none of them reciprocated. Later, one of them reluctantly said they were told I was NOT the grandmother (even if Zoe’s biological mother had passed away), nor would I ever be.

This is bittersweet. I do not want to replace anyone. I’ve been hoping for a grandchild for a long time. I have been with Karl for more than 20 years. I’m crushed. No pictures are being sent to me, though when I was planning Zoe’s wedding from soup to nuts, we were in constant contact and I thought we were growing closer. I guess not.

How do I navigate this? My mother-in-law is barely speaking to me since I can’t join in the trip to see the baby and has become very snotty. Must I just admire from afar like a bystander, pretending to care?

CAST ASIDE IN NEW YORK

DEAR CAST ASIDE: I wish you had mentioned which family member was telling the others you’re not to be considered that baby’s grandmother. Could it have been Zoe’s mother? If that’s the case, there appears to be more than a little jealousy on her part and a blatant attempt to isolate you.

You are the child’s STEP-grandmother, and photos should be shared with you. I hope Karl will impress this upon his daughter as well as let her know how hurt you have been by the treatment you have been receiving. What happened was unjustified. The more love in this world, the better, and labels should be used to include rather than isolate.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My friend often complains that she and her husband don’t have any other friends and she doesn’t know why. I know why, but I’m not sure if I should say anything.

Her husband is nice, but he’s a long-winded talker who takes over every conversation, bragging about himself and the people he knows. I believe he does this to impress people, but it actually repels them. He does this every time, and I have witnessed guys walk away and keep their distance from him. This includes my husband.

She wants my husband to get closer to him, but my husband can’t stand him because of this. So, should I be honest and tell her what the deal is? I don’t want to hurt her feelings. Or must I keep pretending I don’t know?

KNOWS WHY IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR KNOWS: I think you would be doing the woman a favor by telling her something like this: “I can’t arm-twist my husband into a closer relationship with yours than they already have. If you would like to know why, I will tell you.” If she says yes, explain that you like her very much, but her husband’s need to dominate the conversation and brag about his accomplishments, net worth, etc. (fill in the blanks) drives people away.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby’s most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

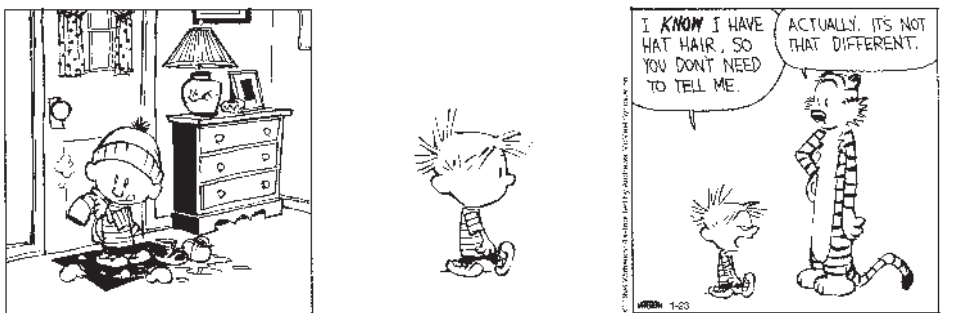
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

I WOKE UP. HOW CAN YOU BOTH STILL BE TALKING?
YOU'RE ACTUALLY PROBABLY STILL ASLEEP.
DREAM WITHIN A DREAM. A PRETTY TIRED MOVIE TROPE, I'D SAY.
AND... NICK IS A MOVIE CRITIC?
WELL, MORE OF A COMIC STRIP CRITIC TODAY, REALLY.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT CAN I BRING YOU, MA'AM?
A NEW DATE. THIS ONE IS CHEAP.
I TOLD YOU I'M WILLING TO SPLURGE AND SPLIT THE CHECK 55/45.
WHAT TIME DOES YOUR DISHWASHER GET OFF?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 German city
5 "Me time" resort
8 Cicatrix
12 Emmy winner Falco
13 Little louse
14 Deli scale button
15 Unrivaled
16 Campus figure
18 Wall street workers
20 Increased
21 Texter's guffaw
22 Zing
23 46th president
26 Verbal attack
30 — Claire, WI
31 Morning moisture
32 Jurist Fortas
33 Natural
36 First-rate
38 Preventive shot, in slang
39 Dance syllable
40 Storage site
43 Carried the clubs
47 Like a drum beat
49 Early Peruvian
50 Walking stick
51 Ordinal suffix
52 Yankee nickname
53 "A Room of — Own"
54 Dead heat
55 TV star Leakes

DOWN
1 Karate level
2 Scent
3 Jazz singer Simone
4 Haystack find
5 Entangle
6 Snapshots
7 — standstill
8 Treeless tract
9 Overly theatrical
10 Singer India.—
11 Shipping dept. stamp
17 Hamilton-Burr event
19 A gazillion years
22 "Wham!"
23 Garden buzzer
24 Author Fleming
25 Flop
26 Chest muscle
27 Avril follower
28 Co. that created Watson
29 Corp. boss
31 Fort —, NJ
34 Paperless party reminders
35 Supersonic unit
36 Prof's degree
37 Angular measure
39 Secret store
40 Not pizzicato
41 Compared to
42 Broadway actress Daly
43 New York's — Field
44 Concerning
45 Nobel Prize subj.
46 Miami- — County
48 Ran into

Solution time: 22 mins.

I	A	L	K		B	O	S		I	S	A	R
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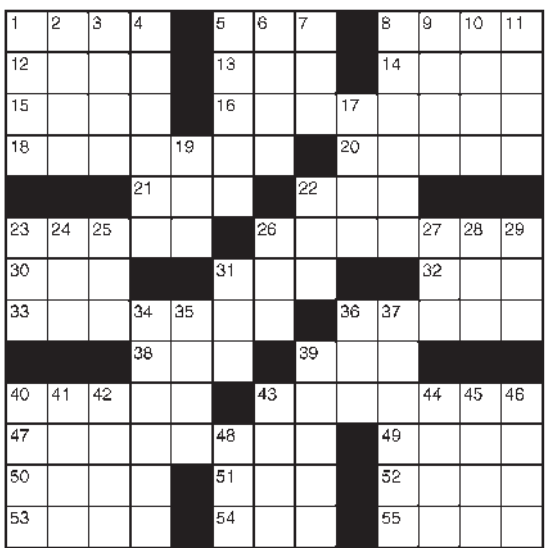
V	E	N	I		B	A	M		S	A	I	F
P	S	S	T		S	I	S		F	I	A	M

Yesterday's answer 1-23



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Tiffani Thiessen, 50; Mariska Hargitay, 60; Gail O'Grady, 61; Richard Dean Anderson, 74.

Happy Birthday: Find out all you can and proceed with confidence. Knowledge is your ticket to success. Don't hesitate to adjust your lifestyle to suit your needs. Stay focused on what matters, and eliminate what is weighing you down. Simplifying your life will allow you to use your time and energy to enjoy the journey and reach your destination. Romance and personal growth are favored. Your numbers are 8, 14, 25, 29, 32, 34, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Revamp your plans to suit your needs. Listen and observe, but don't offer your thoughts. Move forward secretly until you know who you can trust. Keep your emotions out of your decisions and conversations. Bide your time. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Pursue knowledge and expand your social expectations. It's up to you to put your plans in motion and enlist people with something to contribute. Don't rely on someone else to do the work for you. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Live and learn. Don't forget your experience and knowledge when faced with a dilemma. Don't wait for someone to make the first move. Jump into action and take control of your future. Move forward on your own steam. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Use your energy wisely. You can move forward if you act decisively to enforce positive change. Don't sit idle when you have much to offer and more to gain. Devise a plan and proceed. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Consider your situation and decide what to do next based on facts, not fiction. Once you have verified the information, you will find it easier to react appropriately. Keep your emotions to yourself, and don't let poor behavior play a role in what transpires. Simple tactics are the best route forward. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Call on someone you enjoy being around, and you'll get the backup you require to get your plans up and running. A unique change will interest someone with the equipment or skills to help you achieve your dreams. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Stop contemplating the changes you must address at home and put some muscle behind your effort. What you do matters, so stop talking and get the job done. Expect to face criticism if you don't deliver. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Keep your spending to a minimum. A change of attitude will attract helpful individuals. A unique point of view will draw attention to a cause you care about. Take an intellectual approach to change instead of letting brute force lead the way. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Keep an open mind, but don't believe everything you hear. Someone will go to great lengths to convince you of something false. Go directly to the source and uncover what's real before you move. Protect your money and position. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Follow your passion. Embrace the future and expand your interests. Take control by changing what doesn't work for you anymore. Update your goals, and make room for what matters most. Choose your fate, and take the path that allows you to be unique. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Moderation is in your best interest. You can take advantage of an opportunity if you are willing to do the legwork. A conversation with an expert or authority figure will point you in the right direction. Maintain a steady pace and tight budget. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Adjust your routine and home life to suit your needs. Personal gain, physical improvements and spending more time with someone you love will put you in the right frame of mind to go after your dreams. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are passionate, helpful and unique. You are productive and challenging.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

1	7	5	6	8	3			
			7	4		5		1
			9		5		7	
7		4				9	6	
5								7
	6					1	4	5
	5	6			8	2	1	
		7					3	9
2	3		1		4		5	6

Difficulty: ★★ 1/23

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	7	1	5	6	3	2	8	9
8	9	5	7	1	2	3	6	4
2	3	6	4	8	9	5	1	7
7	5	2	9	4	6	8	3	1
3	6	9	1	2	8	7	4	5
1	8	4	3	7	5	9	2	6
6	1	8	2	5	7	4	9	3
9	4	7	8	3	1	6	5	2
5	2	3	6	9	4	1	7	8

Difficulty: ★ 1/22

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY **Solution: 8 letters**

T	A	R	C	O	M	E	D	S	S	E	R	D	D	A
H	I	N	D	E	P	E	N	D	E	N	T	E	U	S
G	N	Y	C	C	R	I	T	I	C	A	L	H	G	S
I	O	T	L	O	D	E	B	A	T	E	S	D	O	E
R	C	I	L	P	U	P	O	P	G	A	E	B	V	M
M	A	T	O	S	M	N	R	A	N	R	A	I	E	B
A	L	N	P	R	H	O	T	A	R	L	S	D	R	L
N	E	E	E	C	G	E	C	Y	L	R	I	S	N	E
C	F	T	E	R	S	I	S	O	E	T	S	U	M	S
H	T	E	E	E	L	W	T	B	N	R	U	L	E	S
E	P	S	T	B	A	I	M	T	O	T	A	L	N	K
S	S	O	U	L	E	U	S	S	I	O	E	N	T	E
T	V	P	Y	E	N	D	O	R	S	E	N	S	K	E
E	E	B	O	X	D	E	S	I	V	E	L	E	T	N
R	E	T	N	E	C	O	N	C	O	R	D	A	T	E

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Address, Assemble, Ballot, Bids, Box, Bylaws, Center, Comply, Concord, Contest, County, Critical, Date, Debate, Delegates, Democrat, Derry, Endorse, Entity, Government, Independent, Issue, Keene, Laconia, Left, Manchester, Nashua, Numbers, Poll, Progress, Rank, Republican, Right, Rules, Speech, Sums, Televised, Term, Total, Votes

Yesterday's Answer: Freezer

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 66 through 76,** order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Kelce scores twice and Chiefs beat Bills to advance to AFC championship

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)—No matter the setting—Arrowhead Stadium or Orchard Park—Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs keep finding ways to beat Josh Allen and Buffalo Bills in the playoffs.

Mahomes threw two touchdown passes to Travis Kelce and the defending Super Bowl champion Chiefs advanced to their sixth straight AFC championship game with a 27-24 win over the Bills on Sunday night.

The Chiefs move on to Baltimore to face Lamar Jackson and the conference's top-seeded Ravens, who beat Houston 34-10 on Saturday.

Kansas City is 0-1 in the playoffs against the Ravens, following a 30-7 loss in the 2010 wild-card round. Baltimore defeated Kansas City 36-35 in their most recent regular-season matchup in Week 2 of the 2021 season.

"There's no weakness there," Mahomes said of the Ravens. "It's going to take our best effort. Defense, offense, special teams, they do it all. It's always a great challenge and that stadium's going to be rocking, so we're excited for the challenge."

Mahomes passed his first test by winning his first true road playoff game—not including Super Bowl neutral sites—and improving his postseason record to 13-3.

"First of all, this is a great environment, man," Mahomes said of Buffalo. "It really is. We did hear it all week, man, about playing a road game, and we're here to prove a point and show that we can play anywhere."

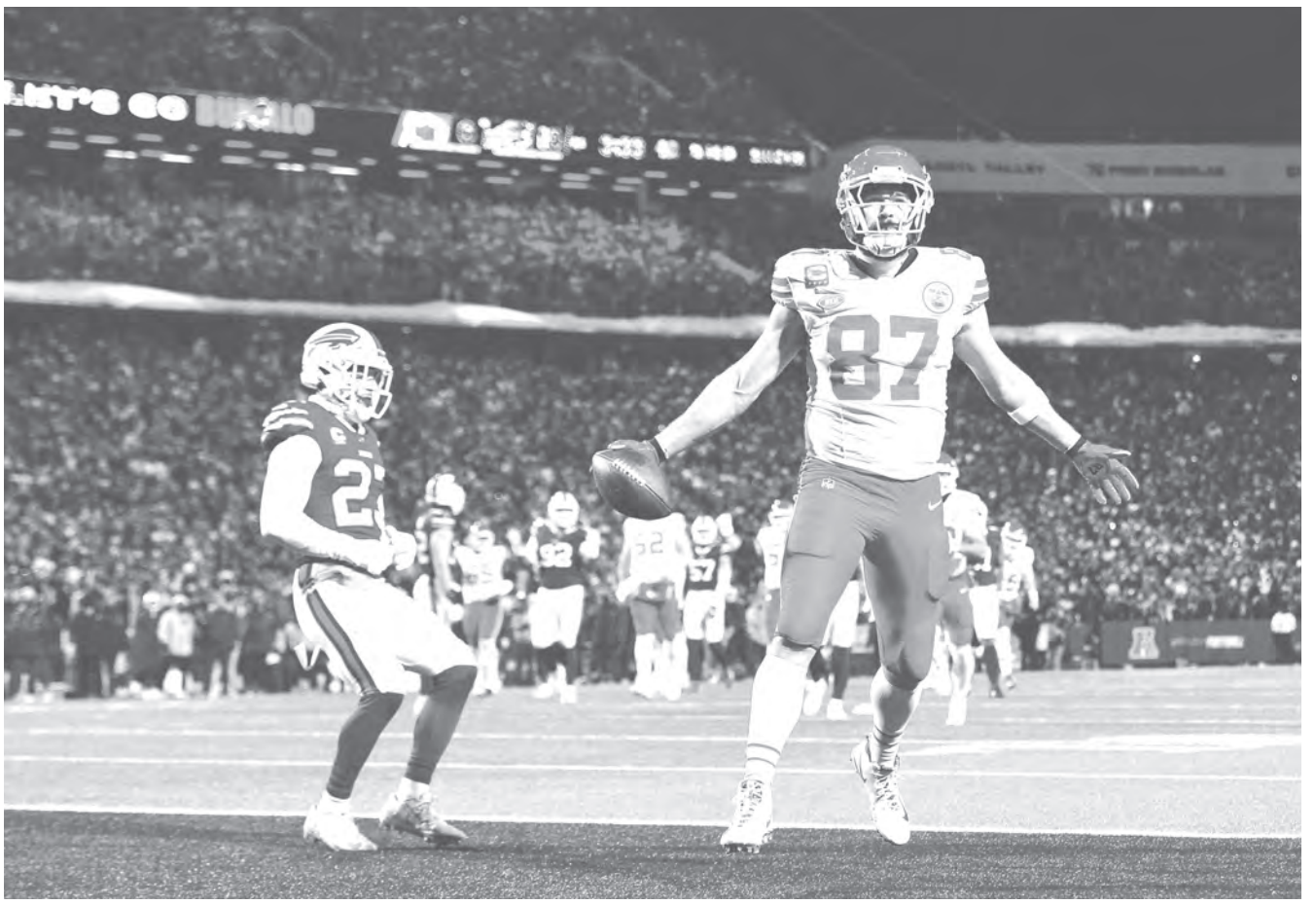
The Chiefs are accustomed to ending the Bills' season, having done it now in three of the past four playoffs, with the first two wins coming at home in the 2020 AFC championship game and the 2021 divisional round.

"All-time classic again. Any time we play Sean's teams, it comes right down to the end," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said, referring to Bills coach Sean McDermott.

The Chiefs scored on five of their first six possessions, not including a kneeldown at halftime, and went ahead for good on Isiah Pacheco's 4-yard touchdown run 40 seconds into the fourth quarter.

Neither team led by more than seven points and they traded leads five times. The outcome was decided when Buffalo kicker Tyler Bass missed a potential game-tying field goal wide right from 44 yards, allowing the Chiefs to run out the remaining 1:47.

"Ultimately, completely on me," said Bass, who had a field goal blocked and missed from 27 yards in a playoff-opening 31-17 win over Pittsburgh last week. "I feel terrible. I love this team, man. It hurts. This one hurts bad."



AP

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce (87) scores a touchdown against the Buffalo Bills during the second quarter of an NFL AFC division playoff football game, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Allen blamed himself for having Buffalo's final drive stall at the Chiefs 26 following two incompletions—the last a throwaway after he was flushed out of the pocket.

"I wish he wouldn't have been put in that situation. You win as a team you lose as a team. One play doesn't define a game, doesn't define a season," Allen said. "Losing sucks. Losing to them, losing to anybody."

The Bills keep finding different ways to lose to the Chiefs. After being blown out 38-24 at Kansas City in the 2020 season AFC championship game, Buffalo came up short in a 42-36 overtime loss in the divisional round a year later.

The game has since been dubbed "13 Seconds" because that's how much time was left for Mahomes to march the Chiefs 44 yards on two plays to set up Harrison Butker's 49-yard field goal. Mahomes then clinched the win with a 9-yard touchdown pass to—who else?—Kelce.

The tight end didn't stick around to address reporters after this win, as he was perhaps busy rushing out to visit with girlfriend, pop music superstar Taylor Swift, and his brother Jason, who celebrated watching his two-TD outing from a suite.

Travis Kelce celebrated his first touchdown catch—a 22-yarder—by making a heart gesture with his hands and directed toward Swift's suite at the opposite end of the field. And Jason Kelce celebrated the touchdown shirtless while holding a can of beer.

Mahomes was 17 of 23 for 215 yards, and the two TD passes to Kelce were the 15th and 16th times they've combined for scores in the playoffs. They have one more than Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski for the NFL record for most playoff TDs for a quarterback-receiver combination.

"It speaks to Travis and his work, to be able to go out there and make plays in big games," Mahomes said. "Passing anything that has Brady and Gronk in it is special. Because those are two of the greatest players."

Allen went 26 of 39 for 186 yards and a touchdown, and also ran for two scores. His team-leading 72 yards rushing increased his career playoff total to 563, the second most among NFL quarterbacks in league history and trailing only Steve Young (594).

It was another disappointing finish for a Bills team that won its fourth consecutive AFC East title, and was on a six-game roll since a 20-17 win at Kansas City on Dec. 10.

"Just lost in the playoffs to a team that's kicked us out," safety Jordan Poyer said. "It's tough. You work so hard throughout the season to fight and claw back, our backs against the wall, everybody doubting us midway through the season and we get here and just that close."

LIONS 31, BUCCANEERS 23

DETROIT (AP)—Jared Goff is good enough for Detroit, as his coach recently reminded him.

Cast away by the Los Angeles Rams three years ago in a trade for Matthew Stafford, the quarterback was welcomed by the Lions and has since become a fan favorite at Ford Field, where the crowd chanted his name during a second straight home playoff triumph for the long-downtrodden franchise.

Goff threw his second touchdown pass with 6:22 left and the Lions beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31-23 in the divisional round on Sunday, lifting Detroit into the NFC championship for the first time in 32 years and just the second time in franchise history.

He took a knee on three straight snaps to run out the clock, giving him a chance to enjoy the sights and sounds as fans stood, screamed and twirled white towels.

"I knew it would be the last one in front of our home fans this year, and I took it all in," Goff said.

The Lions (14-5) won two playoff games in a season for the first time since 1957, the last year they won the NFL title, and had two postseason games at home for the first time.

Now they have to travel to face San Francisco, the NFC's top seed, next Sunday for a spot in the Super Bowl—a game they have never played in.

"I envisioned that we would have a chance to compete with the big boys, and that's where we're at," said coach Dan Campbell, who was hired shortly before Goff was acquired.

Jahmyr Gibbs ran through a huge hole for a tiebreaking, 31-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter, and Goff made it a two-TD lead when he connected with Amon-Ra St. Brown for a 9-yard score.

Goff finished 30 of 43 for 287 yards and directed an efficient second-half offense for the Lions, who had long touchdown drives on three consecutive possessions. St. Brown had eight catches for 77 yards, and his TD catch capped a masterful 10-play, 89-yard drive.

"Goff in that fourth quarter, he really showed up and made some big throws," said Campbell, who told Goff he was good enough for Detroit last week when he gave him a game ball after beating his former team in a wild-card game.

Gibbs, an electric rookie Tampa Bay didn't have to face when it lost to Detroit in the regular season, had 74 yards rushing on nine carries and four receptions for 40 yards.

The Lions, and their desperate-for-a-winner fans, hope their second appearance in the NFC title game works out better than the first when Washington routed them 41-10 on Jan. 12, 1992.

Baker Mayfield threw three TD passes for Tampa Bay (10-9), including a 16-yard toss to Mike Evans that got the Bucs within one score with 4:37 left.

Detroit couldn't run out the clock on offense, giving Tampa Bay one last chance, but Mayfield's pass over the middle was intercepted by linebacker Derrick Barnes, the quarterback's second pick of the day.

Mayfield was 26 of 41 for 349 yards. His early pick went off Mike Evans' hands, and his late one was an ill-advised throw.

"It comes down to minimizing mistakes and I didn't do that," Mayfield said.

Evans had eight receptions for 147 yards and a touchdown.

Rachaad White had 55 yards rushing on nine carries, a total coach Todd Bowles may lament wasn't higher, and four catches for 36 yards.

"Anything short of the Super Bowl is a disappointment," Bowles said.

Detroit and Tampa Bay traded field goals and touchdowns to enter the fourth quarter in a 17-all tie.

The Lions went ahead for a third time with 3:48 left in the third quarter, when Campbell went for it on fourth-and-goal from the 1 and Craig Reynolds ran up the middle for a score that ended a 10-play, 64-yard drive.

Mayfield and the Bucs bounced back again with the crafty veteran, who resurrected his career this season, avoiding sacks before connecting with White on a 12-yard pass to make it 17-all late in the third.

Gibbs started left and cut back to the right on his tiebreaking touchdown run.

The NFC North champion Lions were fortunate to score first.

C.J. Gardner-Johnson picked off Mayfield's pass that went through Evans' hands to end Tampa Bay's first drive. Goff almost gave it back, underthrowing a pass into the end zone that defensive back Jamel Dean dropped, and two snaps later, Michael Badgley made a 23-yard field goal.

Mayfield answered, converting a third down with an 18-yard pass to Evans and throwing a 23-yard pass to Trey Palmer on consecutive plays to set up Chase McLaughlin's 43-yard kick.

Goff converted a third down with a 9-yard touchdown pass to Josh Reynolds early in the second quarter.

Mayfield used his feet and arm to pull the Bucs into a tie just before halftime. He ran for 14 yards—the longest run by a Tampa Bay quarterback in a playoff game—on a third down and then connected with Evans for 27- and 29-yard passes to set up a 2-yard TD pass to Cade Cotton.

In the end, the NFC South champions came up short, ending a season in which they surpassed modest expectations.

That wasn't of much consolation.

"It feel like my heart just got ripped out," Mayfield said.

Bucs' Kaevon Merriweather (ankle) was injured in the third quarter and was carted off the field. Dean limped off the field in the fourth.

Lions' Jonah Jackson (knee) was injured in the first half and didn't return. Brock Wright (forearm) was knocked out of the game in the second half.

Clippers close with 22-0 run, overcome 18-point deficit to beat Nets

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kawhi Leonard scored 14 of his 21 points in the final five minutes and the Los Angeles Clippers overcame an 18-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the Brooklyn Nets 125-114 on Sunday.

The Clippers took their first lead on Leonard's basket with 2:50 remaining. They closed with a 22-0 run, capped by Leonard's 3-pointer from the corner, to win for the 10th time in 12 games.

James Harden led the Clippers with 24 points and 10 assists. Russell Westbrook added 23 points off the bench.

Mikal Bridges scored 20 of his 26 points in the first half for Brooklyn. The Nets were coming off an 18-point victory over the Lakers on Friday night.

AP

Los Angeles Clippers guard Russell Westbrook (0) dives to the basket against the Brooklyn Nets during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in Los Angeles.

CELTICS 116, ROCKETS 107

HOUSTON (AP)—Kristaps Porzingis scored 32 points and NBA-leading Boston beat short-handed Houston.

The Celtics improved to 33-10, rebounding from their first home loss of the season Friday night against Denver. Boston is 20-1 at home and 13-9 on the road.

Derrick White added 21 points and 12 rebounds, and Jayson Tatum scored 18 points. Jaylen Brown had 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his third career triple-double. Dillon Brooks led Houston with 25 points.

Houston played without Fred VanVleet (lower back), Jabari Smith Jr. (ankle), Jeff Green (calf), Reggie Bullock (lower back) and Tari Eason (leg). Boston was without Al Horford (rest) and Jrue Holiday (right elbow sprain).

SUNS 117, PACERS 110

PHOENIX (AP)—Kevin Durant scored 40 points, Devin Booker had 26 and Phoenix beat Indiana for its fifth straight victory.

Bradley Beal added 25 points on 11-of-16 shooting. He hit three baskets in the final 2:11 that were crucial in helping Phoenix keep the lead. Booker shot just 9 of 24 from the field, including 1 of 7 from 3-point range, but had a crucial steal with about 25 seconds remaining to seal it.

Indiana has lost four of five. Buddy Hield led the Pacers with 18 points, and Pascal Siakam—acquired this week from Toronto—had 15 points and seven assists. All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton sat out for the sixth time in seven games because of a left hamstring strain.

LAKERS 134, TRAIL BLAZERS 110

LOS ANGELES (AP)—D'Angelo Russell scored 34 points, LeBron James added 28 and Los Angeles routed Portland to get back to .500 at 22-22.

Austin Reaves scored 15 points, and Anthony Davis had 14 points and 14 rebounds to help the Lakers bounce back from an 18-point loss to Brooklyn two nights earlier. Russell and James combined to score the Lakers' first 19 points of the fourth.

Malcolm Brogdon led Portland with 23 points and nine assists.

NUGGETS 113, WIZARDS 104

WASHINGTON (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 42 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists and defending champion Denver beat Washington.

Jokic was 15 of 20 from the field and made 12 of 14 free throws. Jamal Murray AND Michael Porter Jr. each had 19 points.

Tyus Jones had 15 points and 13 assists for Washington.

MAGIC 105, HEAT 87

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Paolo Banchero scored 20 points and Orlando handed Miami its third straight loss,

Wendell Carter Jr. added 17 points and nine rebounds and Franz Wagner, back in the lineup after missing eight games because of a sprained ankle, also had 19 points.

Bam Adebayo led Miami with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

Heat retire Udonis Haslem's No. 40 jersey

MIAMI (AP)—Udonis Haslem averaged 7.5 points and 6.6 rebounds in his career. He never made an All-Star team. Never had a triple-double. Never signed anything close to a max contract. Never even won a player of the week award.

The stats might seem ordinary.

Yet to the Miami Heat, he's forever legendary.

The Miami native, who spent his entire 20-year career with the Heat—part of three championship teams and serving as captain in 16 of his seasons—watched his now-retired No. 40 jersey raised to the rafters on Friday night, the culmination of a career that saw him go from undrafted to virtually unmatched.

He's one of only three players who spent a career of 20 years or more with one franchise. Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki and the Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant are the others.

"You all got the money on me crying, don't y'all? I know you all think I'm going to cry," Haslem said. "Yeah, it's hard. It's hard. It's hard. Heat Nation, it's been an absolute honor, man."

And then he stopped to wipe his eyes, evidently welling with tears behind the sunglasses he wore inside a darkened arena. He was too emotional to read the remarks he prepared so he went off the top of his head, thanking virtually every member of the organization, his family and former teammates.

Haslem also paid tribute to all of Miami—area code 305.

"You've got to hold up the 305," he said. "Tonight, we all celebrate, 305."

Haslem, who would like to eventually join the Heat ownership group and currently works for the team as a vice president of player development, is the sixth player to get a jersey retired by the Heat. The others: Chris Bosh (No. 1), Dwyane Wade (No. 3), Tim Hardaway (No. 10), Shaquille O'Neal (No. 32) and Alonzo Mourning (No. 33).

Haslem's won't be the last; the Heat have already said they will eventually retire No. 6 for LeBron James. The five previous retired-jersey recipients by the Heat are already in the Basketball Hall of Fame. And Heat President Pat Riley said Haslem's legacy should be celebrated as well.

"Udonis Haslem, his force mattered and it counted," Riley said. "And that's one of the reasons why we're hanging his jersey here today. ... Udonis Haslem is going to leave a very big footprint."

There were many gifts: a $50,000 check to his foundation from the Heat charitable fund, a commemorative jersey, a replica of the retirement banner—and three new seats in the arena in honor of Haslem's late father, mother and stepmother.

Haslem—the franchise's all-time rebounding leader—was the NBA's oldest active player at 43 when he retired after last season. He also became the oldest player to appear in an NBA Finals game, doing so two days before his 43rd birthday when the Heat played the Nuggets last year in the title round.

He played in a total of 65 regular-season games over his last seven NBA seasons, and some pundits often questioned why Haslem was still an active player. The Heat laughed at such criticism, insisting that Haslem's value in the locker room, on the practice court and as a mentor was invaluable.

"He spent 20 years with one organization and helped everyone he could for those 20 years," said Goran Dragic, one of the many former teammates who was at Friday's ceremony. "He deserves this."

Added Heat center Bam Adebayo, who succeeded Haslem as Miami's captain this season: "He was the glue. A lot of people get lost in the stats, who averages the most, but he was the glue for everybody. ... And I feel like the glue guys are the most important guys on a team."

Orlando coach Jamahl Mosley said he wished he could have been at the ceremony, just to pay tribute to Haslem's toughness and what he meant to the league.

"I think it just goes to show the impact that you can have on an organization, on a community, on the players around you when you don't make it about you," Mosley said. "And I think he's embodied that more than anyone. It's about the 'Heat Culture,' it's about who he is, it's about him in the community and Dade County. It's who he is."

There are larger-than-life reminders everywhere in the arena that the Heat call home about what Haslem did in his 20 years. There are photos of him holding NBA championship trophies, photos of him with a stream of blood coming from his temple after a playoff dust-up against Indiana, photos of him dumping a Gatorade bucket over Heat coach Erik Spoelstra's head to celebrate a title.

"The Miami Heat organization, we will not only always celebrate his legacy, but we'll educate people on his legacy," Spoelstra said. "And his legacy is important to the league as well. My hope is this gets acknowledged and recognized throughout the league … so this new generation of younger players can understand what being an all-time winner can look like."

Clippers to host 2026 All-Star Game at new Intuit Dome

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—The NBA is bringing the 2026 All-Star Game to the Los Angeles Clippers' new arena, which is set to open in time for the 2024-25 season.

"I was giddy when I heard it was possible and even giddier when the NBA said we were getting it," said Clippers owner Steve Ballmer, who attended Tuesday's announcement inside the under-construction Intuit Dome in Inglewood.

Commissioner Adam Silver spent an hour touring the building with Ballmer earlier in the day. The Clippers plan to move in by June and open the building in August.

"The good news is there will be a season here before we play the All-Star Game, so there will be an opportunity to make sure everything is up to grade," Silver said. "It would have been a riskier proposition if we announced an All-Star Game going into the very next season."

Silver said Intuit Dome will be the basketball venue for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"I think everyone knows he likes things loud," he said, referring to Ballmer. "It's going to be loud in here. It's this incredible experience."

Ballmer and Silver spoke on the floor of the arena to a soundtrack of clanging and sawing as construction continued around them.

"We said, 'Could we stop the sawing for eight minutes?'" Silver said, "And they said no."

The privately financed arena will house all of the Clippers' basketball and business operations, with an eye on landing major events.

The first will be the 75th edition of All-Star weekend.

The event returns to Southern California for the first time since 2018, when it was played in downtown Los Angeles at the arena formerly known as Staples Center. It will be the seventh All-Star Game in the area, with two having been held at the Forum in Inglewood.

The weekend begins Feb. 13, 2026, with the Rising Stars game for top rookies and second-year players at Intuit Dome.

The All-Star Saturday Night on Feb. 14 includes the skills, 3-point and slam dunk contests. The All-Star Game will be Feb. 15.

Other related events will be held at the Ballmer-owned Kia Forum and the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Silver said the Lakers opted not to be part of the festivities because of other events already booked into Crypto.com Arena in downtown Los Angeles.

Indianapolis will host next month and San Francisco is the site in 2025 at Chase Center, the Golden State Warriors' arena that opened in 2019.

Medvedev, Noskova, Yastremska advance to quarterfinals

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Daniil Medvedev is through to the Australian Open quarterfinals along with Dayana Yastremska and Linda Noskova, the latter two players for the first time at a Grand Slam singles tournament.

Medvedev beat Nuno Borges 6-3, 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-1 Monday to reach the last eight. He'll play either No. 9 Hubert Hurkacz or French wild-card entry Arthur Cazaux.

Yastremska beat two-time champion Victoria Azarenka 7-6 (6), 6-4 while 18th-ranked Elina Svitolina was trailing Noskova 3-0 when Svitolina retired with a back injury.

Azarenka served for the first set twice and had two set points at 6-5 but couldn't take them and Yastremska won the opening set on her second chance after 74 minutes. The Ukrainian then led 3-0 in the second set but Yastremska won six of the next seven games to clinch victory, ending with 37 winners.

AP

Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine celebrates after defeating Victoria Azarenka of Belarus in their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024.

"I think I need to take a thousand breaths because my heart I think is going to jump out of my body," Yastremska said.

"During the match, I was imagining how I lost already like 25 times. I was losing the tiebreak, second set I was losing, I always felt I was running behind the train. But because I'm a little bit of a fighter I think I won this match and plus the support, it was amazing."

There was no handshake, as is the convention between Ukrainian and Russian and Belarusian players, though Yastremska raised her racket toward Azarenka.

The first game of the Noskova-Svitolina match lasted 11 minutes and contained 20 points. Noskova broke serve and held for 2-0 before Svitolina had a timeout and received treatment on her lower back.

When she resumed, the Ukrainian's serve speed was well down and her movement appeared compromised. After being broken for a second time and fighting back tears, Svitolina shook Noskova's hand and retired.

Svitolina said the injury happened at the end of the first game.

"I got a spasm, like a shooting pain," she said. "Couldn't do anything, completely locked my back, just very sad. I had some injuries to my back before where it just was tiredness the next day of the match, but this one was really out of nowhere. I felt like someone shot me in the back."

Noskova beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek in the third round.

"Obviously today was not the way I had planned to win," she said. "I feel sort for Elina, I hope she gets very well soon."

Medvedev had two match points at 5-4 in the third set but Borges forced a fourth set only to fade away as the Russian pulled away for victory.

"Third set was tough physically because he was playing very aggressive," Medvedev said. "As soon as I would hit one shot that was not aggressive or deep enough he would just go full power. It was pretty impressive.

"After the third set, I just hoped it would not be five sets and I'm glad it wasn't."

Later Monday, men's No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz bids for a place in the last eight when he plays Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia.

Source: Hader agrees to $95M, 5-year contract with Astros

Hard-throwing reliever Josh Hader and the Houston Astros agreed to a $95 million, five-year contract on Friday, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal was subject to a successful physical.

Hader will get a $19 million salary in each of the next five seasons, none of it deferred. He gets a full no-trade provision and would receive a $1 million bonus for winning the Mariano Rivera/Trevor Hoffman Reliever of the Year Award.

Hader's deal can be considered the most lucrative for a relief pitcher, even while falling short of the total dollars in Edwin Díaz's $102 million, five-year contract with the New York Mets that began last year. Díaz's deal includes $26.5 million in deferred payments he won't completely receive until 2042 and was valued at $93.2 million for baseball's luxury tax and $88.8 million by the players' association.

A 29-year-old with long, flowing hair, Hader returns to the Astros organization after spending two years in their minor league system from mid-2013 through mid-2015. He figures to take over as closer and push Ryan Pressly back to a setup role in a bullpen that also includes Rafael Montero and Bryan Abreu.

Héctor Neris became a free agent and remains unsigned. Houston reached the agreement three days after announcing reliever Kendall Graveman will miss the season after right shoulder surgery.

Hader became a free agent for the first time last fall after turning down a $20,325,000 qualifying offer from San Diego, which acquired him in a deadline trade from Milwaukee in 2022. Hader made $14.1 million last year.

He was 2-3 with a 1.28 ERA and 33 saves in 38 chances for San Diego in 61 appearances last season, striking out 85 and walking 30 in 56 1/3 innings. He disappointed in his Padres debut season with a 7.31 ERA and seven saves over 19 games down the stretch.

Hader has been picked to the last five National League All-Star teams, starting in 2018, his first full season in the big leagues. During the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, when there wasn't an All-Star Game, Hader had 13 saves to lead the NL for the only time.

BUCO

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and for Buco, he said the race was tough because of it. He hasn't been training much lately as well because he's been busy with work, but decided to just join the event anyway. He said in Filipino, "the course was hard so not a lot of people were with me in the lead. I had the lead all to myself and the rest of the bikers were just going at their own steady pace."

Buco said of the event, "it was a good event. I saw a lot of people are joining the fundraiser and so I decided to join it too. I actually just signed up for the event the night before the race."

As for Corotan, who at 65 years old didn't even seem like he broke out in a sweat when he reached the finish line, said that the course was "flat and a little windy, but I managed to do what I could."

Fighting thirst because he forgot to bring a water bottle with him, he actually stopped toward the end of the course to get a quick drink. Even with the short pause, he was still in the lead.

The 12-year veteran biker said of the event, "it's nice. I think this is the most participants I've seen in a race." As for the cause, which is to help end polio, he said, "it's important. So maybe next time, when there's fundraisers like this again, I'll join. We need to help each other out."

He shared that he didn't finish the Hell of Marianas held last December because of an accident he had during the race, but after, also joined a bike race in Guam.

Results of the MTB races, Road Bike women's division, E-Bike, and kid's course will be posted in the next editions of *Saipan Tribune*.

PIRATES

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the game as the Blue Jays' own pitching staff crumbled.

The Blue Jays had a one-run lead at the end of the sixth—thanks in part to J-Boy Deleon Guerrero's inside-the-parker, 14-13, but the Pirates' unblemished record isn't just for show—and they sunk the Blue Jays' hopes when they added 10 more runs in the last inning.

The Pirates had a lot on their mind—or more like loot on their mind—as they pillaged and plundered every run that they could get from the Blue Jays' unfortunately weakening pitching staff and faltering defense.

Pirates' Audie Maratita scored on an inside-the-park homer the inning before and helped himself to more runs as he hit two RBI doubles. Another RBI double was made by Mario Aguon, but not before two more runs scored.

After Aguon, a run was added, and the lineup restarted as the Blue Jays just could not register three outs. Pete Sablan added two more runs for the Pirates before the inning ended mercifully on a groundout.

The Blue Jays then conceded as they could only conjure one more run in their last at-bat.

In the end of this high-scoring game, Maratita continued to tack on to his batting accolades as he went up to the plate six times, scored three runs, had three hits, two RBIs, two doubles, and one inside-the-park home run. Teammate Pete Sablan added to their loot as he went 3-for-4, scored four runs, bagged three RBIs, and walked twice.

WOMEN'S

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won the last two tournaments in November and December.

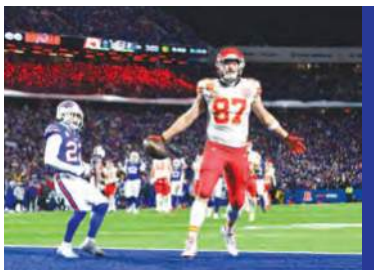
"Their team is filled with veterans—of course Kina is young, but she's really good for her age. I don't see it as dethroning yet because we still have two or three more rounds," said Kautz. "The goal is to get to Singapore and until we're there, I don't see it as dethroning."

The last two 3x3 series in November and December were won by The Angry Penne and they still have a chance of representing NMI in the FIBA Asia 3x3 Cup in Singapore.

Currently, Trail Glaziers is in the lead in the points system with 130 points; The Angry Penne is second at 90 points; Swish Kebabs are third at 70; Teine Aeto is at 30; and Dunkin' Donuts are at 20 points.

LEIGH GASES

Trail Glaziers' Jan Travilla attempts a free throw during their finals in the January NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series against The Angry Penne last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.



Kelce scores twice and Chiefs beat Bills to advance to AFC championship.

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Sports

Medvedev, Noskova, Yastremska advance to quarterfinals.

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Buco, Corotan fastest in End Polio Now bike race

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The bike is just an extension of long-time cyclists Joel Buco and Ponce Corotan at this point as they trekked through the Road Bike 30-kilometer short course and Road Bike 20-km long course of the fastest in the Inaugural Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Cycling Challenge on a windy Saturday morning.

Buco, in the 30-km long course race from Banzai Cliff, Saipan Select, to Bird Island and back, clocked in the fastest at 55:06.

Second place was Renren Gaviola at 56:25, and third place went to Paolo Pepito two seconds after at 56:27.

The U40 category was dominated by J.R. Villamin with a time of 58:08; second was Daniell Pablo at 58:20; and third was Bodie Barrios at 58:38.

Fred Remillosa claimed first in the 40-49 age category at 56:32; Michiteru Mita was second at 58:01; and third was Ferdz Licayan at 58:55.

The 50-59 category first place was Leo Baetiong at 56:45; second was Noel Altamirano at 58:13; and third was Vasily Karpov at 1:03:01.

In the 60-and-above category, Top 3 was Willy Barbo at 59:57; Greg Clark at 1:03:01; and Edgardo Abalos at 1:03:01.

Sixty-five-year-old avid biker Corotan smoked everyone in the short course as he traversed from Banzai Cliff to Tanapag's Saipan Select and back with a sub-40 minute time of 39:75.

After Corotan was Rotary Club International' District 2750's governor Yoichiro Miyazaki, who came from Japan to join the race, with a time of 39:50. Third place was Jaypee Pangilinan at 40:28.

Leo Wania was the lone racer in the 40-49 age category and came in at 57:58.

In the 50-59 age category, Renato Barros was first at 40:52; Enoch Lim was second with a time of 59:03; and third was Ruel Magtalas with 1:03:01.

It was windy for everyone

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LEIGH GASES

Joel Buco rides into first place of the Road Bike 30-kilometer long course with a time of 55:06 in the Inaugural Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Cycling Challenge last Saturday morning that started and ended at Banzai Cliff.

LEIGH GASES

Ponce Corotan is all smiles as he's first place in the Road Bike 20-km short course with a time of 55:06 in the Inaugural Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Cycling Challenge last Saturday morning that started and ended at Banzai Cliff.

Pirates thrash Blue Jays, 23-15

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The undefeated Pirates continue to do what the Pirates do best—and that is win in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

They defeated the Blue Jays, 23-15, last Thursday night at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field and racked their eighth straight win.

It was once again but a flight of fancy of winning for the Blue Jays, even as they pummeled the Pirates' pitching staff with run after run. The Pirates just outdid them in the last inning of

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LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Pirates pitcher Dung Tenorio waits for the catcher's signal during their game in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

Women's division's Team Glaziers pulls off another upset in 3x3

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

It's a new year, so the seeming trend is upsets and new champs as Team Glaziers defeated the women's division reigning champs in the January NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series.

They defeated The Angry Penne(Ally-Oopsie Daisies), 7-4, for the title last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Team Glaziers' Jan Travilla, Kaia Travilla, Madi Alegre, and Miki Kautz outscored defending champs Antonette Labausa, Connie Camacho, Kina Rangamar, and Irish Pagaro in the low-scoring finals.

It was a bunch of missed shots from both sides' defensive pressure that caused the low score throughout the game. Multiple shots didn't make it either from off-balanced throws, or just from too quick a release to get an accurate aim.

In the end, Jan and Kautz put it upon themselves to bring their team to victory as Jan scored 4 and Kautz had 3.

Kautz said it felt good beating the defending champs after their game. "It feels good, especially because of previous tournaments. Our results haven't been what we wanted it to be. But we've been communicating on what we should do on our offensive plays. Defense, I think we're pretty good. It's all about communication with your team and I think we've developed it over the past couple of tournaments and we're happy with the result," said Kautz.

She added that "it was a lot of hard work" in the finals against The Angry Penne (Ally-Oopsie Daisies) team, who

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LEIGH GASES

From left, Trail Glaziers' Jan Travilla, Kaia Travilla, Mikki Kautz, and Madi Alegre pose for a photo after their finals win in the January NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.